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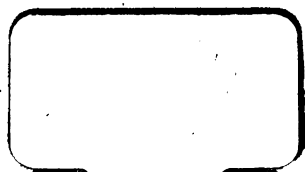
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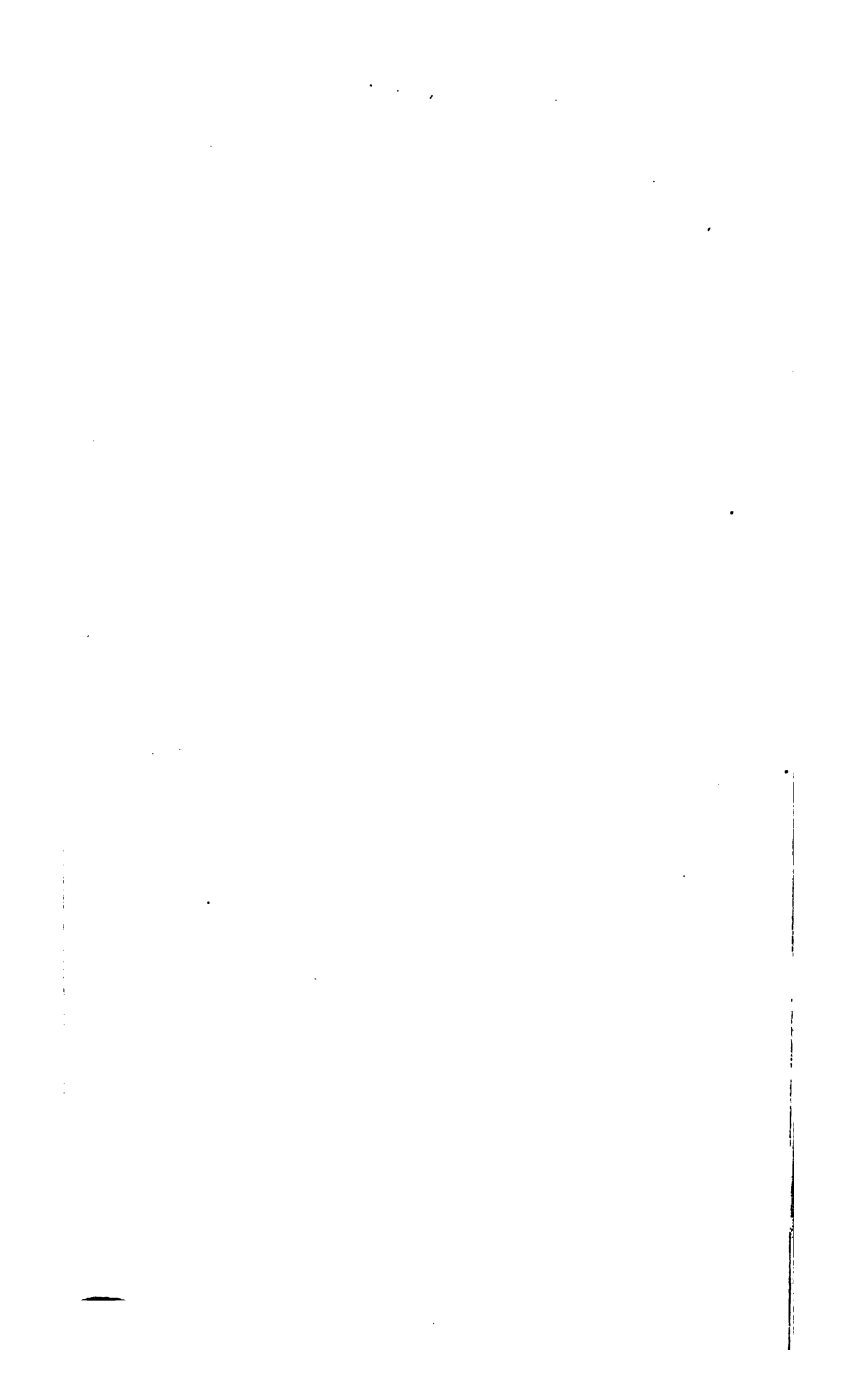
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John Wilson
THE

ELEMENTS
OF
ENGLISH COMPOSITION:

SERVING AS
A SEQUEL
TO THE STUDY OF GRAMMAR.

BY DAVID IRVING, LL. D.
AUTHOR OF THE LIVES OF THE SCOTTISH POETS.

SECOND AMERICAN FROM THE SIXTH LONDON EDITION.

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PREFACE.

THE work now presented to the public, is chiefly intended for the perusal of those whose critical studies are yet in their commencement. To younger students, and to such as have not access to more extensive works, it may, perhaps, convey some useful instruction: it is not intruded upon those who are already conversant in polite literature. Should it be found a suitable introduction to this liberal study, the compiler will have attained the summit of his ambition.

Though it was my principal object to treat of prose composition, yet a few observations on poetry incidentally occur. The remarks which have been suggested with regard to the nature of figurative language, apply equally to prose and to poetry: but the poets have furnished me with the most copious and beautiful illustrations.

The rules of criticism are more successfully inculcated by particular examples than by general precepts. I have, therefore, endeavoured to collect abundance of apposite quotations, in order to illustrate every branch of the subject. In many instances this was an easy task; but in the classification of the different characters of style, it was attended with the utmost difficulty. To refer the compositions of an author to a particular class, and produce examples from them in support of this decision, will always be found a hazardous attempt. Of this circumstance Cicero and Quintilian seem to have been sufficiently aware. In treating of the general character of a writer's style, they content themselves with referring to the body of his works, in confirmation of their sentence. To such exemplifications as occur in the following treatise, they have never had recourse.

Without pretending to question the propriety of their method, it may be presumed that to the class of readers for whose perusal these *Elements of English Composition* are chiefly intended, a different mode of procedure may,

perhaps, be attended with some advantage. It is of importance for the student to be in some measure acquainted with the style of every author of eminence. The variety of examples exhibited in the course of the work will, at least in his view, be found acceptable. Should they fail in their primary design, they may thus be rendered subservient to another purpose.

To illustrate the progressive improvement of English composition, I have subjoined a variety of quotations from eminent authors. They are arranged nearly according to the priority of publication in the works from which they are selected. This selection commences where that of Dr. Johnson closes. It includes the most distinguished writers of our own times, except those who still live to enjoy the reputation which their talents have secured.

The volume concludes with a few miscellaneous observations on epistolary composition. To be able to maintain a friendly correspondence with propriety and elegance is assuredly a very desirable accomplishment. This branch of composition ought therefore to be assiduous-

ly cultivated, especially by every younger student.

It may, perhaps, be alleged that in my critical strictures I have often betrayed too much severity of censure, and that in general I have been too solicitous to expose the faults of eminent writers. But let it be remembered, that in a work of this kind it was necessary to expose defects, as well as to extol beauties.—Those errors which have received the sanction of great names are always dangerous; as they frequently become the object of absurd imitation.

“Je sais,” says Condillac on a like occasion, “qu’on trouvera mes critiques bien severes; et que la plupart des passages que je blame ne manqueront pas de defenseurs. L’art d’écrire est un champ de disputes, parce qu’au lieu d’en chercher les principes dans le caractere des pensees, nous les prenons dans notre gout; c’est-a-dire, dans nos habitudes de sentir, de voir, et de juger; habitudes qui varient suivant le temperament des personnes, leur condition, et leur age.”

Towards living merit I am unconscious of having been guilty of the slightest instance of disrespect. If I have occasionally taken the liberty of pointing out a few trivial errors, this circumstance can afford no reasonable cause of offence. In exhibiting examples of the faults, as well as of the beauties, of composition, I have invariably had recourse to such works as seemed in some respect entitled to praise. If I have not treated living authors with all the delicacy and tenderness recommended by St. Real, I have at least refrained from every wanton attack.

In the following pages the reader need not expect to discover any originality of observation: I desire to be regarded in no other light than that of a mere compiler. Concerning every critical subject which has fallen under my review, I have endeavoured to collect the most rational opinions of writers distinguished for their learning and judgment. For any valuable instruction which this compilation may exhibit, the reader is principally indebted to Dr. Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric*, Dr. Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, Lord

Kame's *Elements of Criticism*, Bp. Lowth's *Introduction to English Grammar*, and Mr. Melmoth's *Letters of Fitzosborne*. To other occasional sources of information I have been careful to make the proper references; but when I availed myself of the treasures amassed by these excellent writers, I forebore to quote their names; "not that I might appropriate their labours, or usurp their honours, but that I might spare a perpetual repetition by one general acknowledgment."

INTRODUCTION.

CHAPTER I.

THE great and important object of language is, to express the various wants and affections of those by whom it is spoken. In the earlier stages of civil society, man is contented with such comforts as are easily procured, and the operations of the human mind are circumscribed within narrow limits. His vocabulary is consequently scanty, though, at the same time, it may be fully adequate to every purpose to which it is applied. But as luxury and refinement advance in their gradual progress, the language of the community becomes more copious and elegant: it not only oversteps its ancient boundaries, but hastens to lay aside its ancient rudeness and barbarism. Material improvements, however, cannot be introduced by any sudden exertion; they must be the result of that experience which a length of time only can bestow.

Before the elegancies of literature can lay claim to any considerable share of attention, a spirit of general improvement must have begun to pervade the state. Accordingly, we find that vigour and originality of thought have always preceded beauty and accuracy of expression. In the first efforts of untutored genius, the harmony of periods is little regarded: such words as most readily occur to the recollection of the writer,

are almost indiscriminately adopted; and these are generally arranged without much attention to elegance or propriety.

Thus, if we take a retrospective view of English literature at no very remote period, we shall often find the beauty of the thought obscured by the meanness of the expression. Its pages are frequently deformed with uncouthness and vulgarity. Nor is it altogether untainted with these faults in its present state.

Propriety and beauty of style seem often to have been considered beneath the attention both of an author and a reader. The ancients, however, regarded this subject in a different point of view: to be skilled in their native tongue, was esteemed among the number of the politest accomplishments. Julius Cæsar, who was not only a great warrior, but also a man of fashion, was desirous of adding this accomplishment to his other shining qualities: and we are informed that he studied the language of his own country with much application, as we are sure he possessed it in the highest degree of purity and elegance. The literary world cannot sufficiently regret that the treatise which he wrote upon this subject, has perished along with many other valuable works of the same age. But although we are deprived of the benefit of his observations, we are happily in the possession of an illustrious instance of their effects; and his own Commentaries will ever remain as the brightest exemplar, not only of true generalship, but also of fine writing. He published them, indeed, only as materials for the use of those who might be disposed to enlarge upon that remarkable period of the Roman history: yet the purity and gracefulness of his style are such, that no judicious writer afterwards dared to attempt the same

subject. Cicero frequently mentions it as a very high encomium, that the celebrated Roman orators possessed the elegance of their native language. He introduces Brutus, declaring that he should prefer the honour of being esteemed the great master and improver of Roman eloquence, even to the glory of many triumphs.

Beauty of composition tends to heighten the native charms of truth; it therefore ought never to be regarded as an object of small importance.—But it may be alleged that truth requires not the foreign aid of ornament. It is not indeed necessary that she should be exhibited in a glaring habit; but she ought certainly to be clothed with decency and propriety. A beautiful woman in careless and sordid apparel, can never appear to great advantage.

To Locke, Cudworth, Clarke, and Butler, philosophy owes the most serious obligations: but would those great authors have diminished the utility of their literary labours by employing more smooth and polished language? Never, indeed, does the force of reason more effectually subdue the human mind, than when she is supported by the powerful assistance of manly eloquence; as, on the contrary, the most legitimate arguments may be rendered unavailing by being attended with a feeble and unanimated expression. There is as much difference between comprehending a thought clothed in the language of Cicero, and that of an ordinary writer, as there is between viewing an object by the light of the sun and by the light of a taper.

Malebranche has assuredly fallen into a very strange conceit when he insinuates, that the pleasure arising from the perusal of a beautiful composition

is of a criminal nature, and has its source in the weakness and effeminacy of the human mind. That man must possess a very uncommon severity of temper, who can find any thing to condemn in the practice of embellishing truth with additional charms, and winning the heart by captivating the ear; in uniting roses with the thorns of science, and joining pleasure with instruction. The mind is delighted with a fine style, upon the same principle that it prefers regularity to confusion, and beauty to deformity. A taste for the beauties of composition is so far from being a mark of any depravity of our nature, that I should rather be inclined to consider it as an evidence of the moral rectitude of our mental constitution, since it furnishes a direct proof that we retain some relish of order and harmony.

No object has ever appeared of greater importance to wise men, than to tincture the young and susceptible mind with an early relish for the pleasures of taste. Easy in general is the transition from the pursuit of these to the discharge of the higher and more important duties of human life. Sanguine hopes may be entertained of those whose minds have this liberal and elegant turn. It is favourable to the growth of many virtues: whereas to be devoid of taste for the fine arts, is justly regarded as an unpromising symptom in youth, and raises suspicions of their being prone to low gratifications, or destined to drudge in the more vulgar and illiberal pursuits of life. There are few good dispositions of any kind with which the improvement of this faculty is not in some degree connected. A cultivated taste increases sensibility to all the tender and humane passions, by giving them frequent exercise; while, on the other hand, it tends

to weaken the more violent and fierce emotions, by exciting in us a lively sense of decorum.

From these observations it will appear that the charge of Malebranche is not only ill founded, but absolutely ridiculous. One would however be apt to suspect that certain writers among us had considered the subject in the same gloomy point of view: or at least that they had studiously avoided every refinement in style, as unbecoming a lover of truth and wisdom. Their sentiments are debased by the lowest expressions; they seem condemned to the curse of *creeping upon the ground all the days of their life*.

But there is another extreme, which ought also to be carefully avoided. Language may be too pompous, as well as too mean. Some authors mistake pomp for dignity; and with the view of raising their expressions above vulgar language, elevate them above common apprehension. They seem to consider it as a mark of their genius that it requires some ingenuity to discover their meaning, but when their meaning is discovered, it seldom repays the labour of the search.

CHAPTER II.

Of Purity of Style.

STYLE has been defined to be the peculiar manner in which a man expresses his conceptions through the medium of language. It differs from mere language or words. Though the words which an author employs be unexceptionable, yet his style may

be chargeable with great faults; it may be dry, stiff, feeble, affected. The style of an author is always intimately connected with his manner of thinking: it is a picture of the ideas which arise in his mind, and of the manner in which they do arise. Hence the difficulty of drawing an exact line of separation between the style and the sentiment.

All that can be required of language is to convey our ideas clearly to the mind of others, and, at the same time, to clothe them in an advantageous dress. The two general heads of perspicuity and ornament, therefore, comprehend all the qualities of a good style. Perspicuity demands our chief care; for, without this quality, the richest ornaments of language only glimmer through the dark; and puzzle, instead of pleasing, the reader. An author's meaning ought always to be obvious, even to the most careless and inattentive reader; so that it may strike his mind, as the light of the sun strikes our eyes, though they are not directed towards it. We must study, not only that every reader may understand us, but that it shall be impossible for him not to understand us. If we are obliged to follow a writer with much care, to pause, and to read over his sentences a second time, in order to comprehend them fully, he will never please us long. Mankind are too indolent to relish so much labour. They may pretend to admire the author's depth, after they have discovered his meaning; but they will seldom be inclined to bestow upon his work a second perusal.

In treating of perspicuity of style, it will be proper, in the first place, to direct our attention to single words and phrases, and afterwards to the construction of sentences.

Perspicuity, considered with respect to words and phrases, requires the qualities of purity, propriety, and precision. The two first of these are often confounded with each other; and, indeed, they are very nearly allied. A distinction, however, obtains between them. Purity of style consists in the use of such words, and such constructions, as belong to the idiom of the language which we use; in opposition to words and phrases which are imported from other languages, or that are obsolete, or new-coined, or used without proper authority. Propriety of style consists in the selection of such words, as the best and most established usage has appropriated to those ideas which we employ them to express. It implies the correct and happy application of them, according to that usage, in opposition to vulgarisms, or low expressions; and to words and phrases that would be less significant of the ideas which we intend to convey. Style may be pure, that is, it may be strictly English, without Scotisms or Gallicisms, or ungrammatical and unwarranted expressions of any kind, and may nevertheless be deficient in propriety. The words may be unskillfully chosen, not adapted to the subject, nor fully expressive of the author's sentiments. He may have taken his words and phrases from the general mass of the English language; but his selection may happen to be injudicious.

Purity may justly be denominated grammatical truth. It consists in the conformity of the expression to the sentiment which the writer intends to convey; as moral truth consists in the conformity of the sentiment intended to be conveyed, to the sentiment actually entertained; and logical truth in the conformity of the sentiment to the nature of things. The oppo-

site to logical truth is error; to moral truth a lie; to grammatical truth a solecism.

The only standard by which the conformity implied in grammatical truth must be ascertained in every language, is the authorised, rational, and present use of that language.

Grammatical errors, foreign idioms, and obsolete or new-coined words, were mentioned as inconsistent with purity of style. It will not be improper to collect a few hints concerning each of these faults.

I. GRAMMATICAL ERRORS.

It is not in consequence of any peculiar irregularity or difficulty inherent in the English language, that the general practice, both of speaking and writing it, is chargeable with inaccuracy. That inaccuracy proceeds rather from its simplicity and facility; circumstances which are apt to persuade us that a grammatical study of our native tongue is altogether superfluous.* Were the language less easy and simple, we should find ourselves under a necessity of studying it with greater care and attention. But we commonly take it for granted, that we possess a competent knowledge of it, and are able on any occasion to apply our knowledge to practice. A faculty, solely acquired by use, conducted by habit, and tried by the ear,

* "Another will say, it wanteth grammar. Nay, truly, it hath that praise, that it wants not grammar; for grammar it might have, but it needs it not, being so easy in itself, and so void of those cumbersome difference of cases, genders, moods and tenses; which, I think, was a piece of the tower of Babylon's curse, that a man should be put to school to learn his mother tongue."—*Sidney's Defence of Poesy.*

carries us on without the labour of reflection: we meet with no obstacles in our progress, or we do not perceive them; we find ourselves able to proceed without rules, and we never suspect that they may be of any use. A grammatical study of our language forms no part of the ordinary course of instruction; and we seldom apply to it of our own accord. This, however, is a deficiency which no other advantages can supply. Much practice in the polite world, and a general acquaintance with the best authors, must undoubtedly be considered as excellent helps; but even these will hardly be sufficient. A critical knowledge of ancient languages, and an intimate acquaintance with ancient authors, will be found still less adequate to the purpose. Dr. Bently, the greatest critic and most able grammarian of the age in which he lived, was notoriously deficient in the knowledge of his native tongue.

Grammatical errors are so plentifully scattered over the pages of our eminent writers, that it will be no difficult task to select a sufficient number of instances.

1. *Grammatical Errors in the use of Pronouns.*

We contributed a third more than the Dutch, who were obliged to the same proportion more than *us*.—*Swift's Conduct of the Allies.*

King Charles, and more than *him*, the duke, and the Popish faction, were at liberty to form new schemes.—*Bolingbroke's Dissertation on Parties.*

Phalaris, who was so much older than *her*.—*Bentley's Dissertation on Phalaris.*

The drift of all his sermons was, to prepare the Jews for the reception of a prophet, mightier than *him*, and whose shoes he was not worthy to bear.—*Atterbury's Sermons.*

If the king gives us leave, you or I may as lawfully preach, as *them* that do.—*Hobbes's History of Civil Wars.*

In all these examples, the nominative cases of the pronouns ought to have been used. This will more plainly appear from the following resolution of the first illustration: "We contributed a third more than the Dutch, who were obliged to the same proportion more than *we* were obliged to."

The Goths, the Vandals, the Gepidæ, the Burgundians, the Alemanni wasted each other's strength, and whosoever vanquished, *they* vanquished the enemies of Rome.—*Gibbon's Hist. of the Roman Empire.*

Who is the poet, but lately arrived in Elysium, whom I saw Spenser lead in, and present *him* to Virgil?—*Lyttleton's Dialogues of the Dead.*

Here the pronouns *they* and *him* are redundant. In the latter example, the accusative *whom* is understood before the verb *present*: "whom I saw Spenser lead in, and *whom* I saw Spenser *present* to Virgil."

We are alone; here's none but *thee* and I.—*Shakespeare.*

Instead of *thee* it should be *thou*.

Forever in this humble cell,

Let *thee* and *I* my fair one dwell.—*Prior.*

The construction requires *me* instead of *I*.

He, *whom* ye pretend reigns in heaven, is so far from protecting the miserable sons of men, that he perpetually delights to blast the sweetest flowerets in the garden of Hope.—*Hawkesworth's Adventurer.*

It ought to be *who*, the nominative case to *reigns*, not *whom*, as if it were the accusative or objective case governed by *pretend*.

Whom do men say that I am?—*St. Matthew.*

Whom think ye that I am?—*Acts of the Apostles.*

In both these passages it ought to be *who*; which is not governed by the verb, *say*, or *think*, but by the verb *am*.

These feasts were celebrated to the honour of Osiris, *whom* the Grecians called Dionysius, and *is* the same with Bacchus.—*Swift on the Mechan. Oper. of the Spirit.*

Here the relative pronoun of the objective case must be understood as the nominative to the verb *is*. The passage ought to have stood thus: "These feasts were celebrated to the honour of Osiris, *whom* the Grecians called Dionysius, and *who* is the same with Bacchus."

Who should I meet at the coffee-house t'other night, but my old friend.—*Steel, Spectator.*

It is another pattern of this answerer's fair dealing, to give us hints that the author is dead, and yet to lay the suspicion upon somebody, I know not *who*, in the country.—*Swift's Tale of a Tub.*

Here the construction requires *whom*.

Some writers have used *ye* as the accusative plural of the pronoun *thou*. This is an infringement of the rules of grammar.

His wrath, which one day will destroy *ye* both.—*Milton.*

The more shame for *ye*; holy men I thought *ye*.—*Shakespeare.*

I feel the gales that from *ye* blow.—*Gray.*

But tyrants dread *ye*, lest your just decree

Transfer the power and set the people free — *Prior.*

This mode of expression may perhaps be allowed in the comic and burlesque style, which often imitates a vulgar and incorrect pronunciation. But in the serious and solemn style, no authority is sufficient to justify so manifest a solecism.

I heard it first observed by an ingenious and learned old gentleman lately deceased, that many of Mr. Hobbes *his* seeming

new opinions are gathered from those which Sextus Empiricus exposed.—*Dryden's Life of Plutarch.*

My paper is Ulysses *his* bow, in which every man of wit or learning may try his strength.—*Addison, Guardian.*

This by the calumniators of Epicurus *his* philosophy was objected as one of the most scandalous of all their sayings.—*Cowley's Essays.*

The pronoun *his* is here employed to denote the possessive case of the noun which it accompanies. Writers have erroneously imagined that the *'s* which generally marks this case, is a contraction of the possessive pronoun; whereas it is only a contraction of the ancient Saxon genitive termination *es*.

2. Grammatical Errors in the use of Verbs.

And Rebekah took goodly raiment of her eldest son Esau, which *were* with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob her youngest son.—*Genesis.*

The number of the names together *were* about an hundred and twenty.—*Acts of the Apostles.*

If the blood of bulls, and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, *sanctifieth* to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ purge your conscience from dead works.—*St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews.*

I have considered *what have* been said on both sides of the controversy.—*Tillotson's Sermons.*

One would think there *was* more *sophists* than one, had a finger in this volume of letters.—*Bentley's Dissert. on Socrates's Epistles.*

There's *two* or *three* of us have seen strange sights.—*Shakespeare.*

These instances require no elucidation, the reader will easily perceive where the error lies.

Knowing that *you was* my old master's good friend, I could not forbear sending you the melancholy news of his death.—*Addison, Spectator.*

I am just now as well as when you *was* here — *Pope's Letters*.

Desire this passionate lover to give you a character of his mistress, he will tell you that he is at a loss for words to describe her charms, and will ask you seriously, if ever you *was* acquainted with a goddess or an angel. — *Hume's Essays*.

As the word *you* is confessedly plural, its correspondent verb, agreeably to the analogy of all languages, ought also to be plural, whether the discourse be addressed to a single person or to more than one. Many other writers of no small reputation have, however, used the ungrammatical expression *you was*. But if the singular were at all admissible after *you*, there would still be a violation of grammar in *was*, which is confined to the first and third persons; the second being *wast*.

Thou hangman, thou temple-robber, thou clod of earth, from what brothel *did thou come* up in patins, muff'd up, with thy breath smelling of the stews. — *Arbuthnot on the Scolding of the Ancients*.

Thou great First Cause, least understood,

Who all my sense *confin'd*

To know but this, that thou art good,

And that myself am blind;

Yet *gave* me, in this dark estate,

To see the good from ill;

And, binding Nature fast in fate,

Left free the human will. — *Pope*.

Nor thou, lord Arthur, shalt escape;

To thee I often called in vain,

Against that assassin in 'crape;

Yet *thou* couldst tamely see me slain;

Nor, when I felt the dreadful blow,

Or *chid* the dean, or *pinch'd* his spouse. — *Swift*.

To correspond with the pronoun *thou*, all these verbs ought to have been in the second person singular; instead of which, they are in the second person plural,

as if they corresponded with the pronoun *you*. Writers generally have recourse to this mode of expression, that they may avoid harsh terminations.—The distinct forms of *thou* and *you* are often used promiscuously.

The confession is ingenuous, and I hope more from *thee* now, than I could if *you* had promised.—*Arbuthnot's Notes and Memorandums*.

Thy own words have convinced me—(stand a little more out of the sun if *you* please)—that *thou* hast not the least idea of true honour.—*Fielding's Dialogues between Alexander and Diogenes*.

Base ungrateful boy! miserable as I am, yet I cannot cease to love *thee*. My love even now speaks in my resentment. I am still *your* father, nor can *your* usage form my heart anew.—*Goldsmith's Essays*.

Though the ministers of a tyrant's wrath, to *thee* they are faithful, and but too willing to execute the orders which you unjustly imposed upon them.—*Walpole's Castle of Otranto*.

This is not contrary to the rules of English grammar; but it is certainly inelegant and improper.

But the temper, as well as knowledge, of a modern historian, require a more sober and accurate language.—*Gibbon's History of the Roman Empire*.

Magnus, with four thousand of his supposed accomplices, were put to death.—*Ibid*.

Those whom the splendour of their rank, or the extent of their capacity, have placed upon the summit of human life, have not often given any just occasion to envy in those who look up to them from a lower station.—*Johnson's Life of Savage*.

He knows not what spleen, languor, or listlessness, are.—*Blair's Sermons*.

Neither death nor torture were sufficient to subdue the minds of Cargill and his intrepid followers.—*Fox's History of James the Second*.

The above errors have apparently been committed through inattention to the proper signification of the disjunctive participles.

Each of these words *imply* some pursuit or object relinquished.—*Blair's Rhetoric*.

It is requisite that the language of an heroic poem should be both perspicuous and sublime. In proportion as *either* of these two qualities are wanting, the language is imperfect.—*Addison, Spectator*.

Neither of them are remarkable for precision.—*Blair's Rhetoric*.

We should reckon *every* circumstance which enable them to divide and to maintain themselves in distinct and independent communities.—*Ferguson's History of Civil Society*.

'Tis observable, that *every one* of the letters bear date after his banishment.—*Bentleys Dissert. on Themistocles's Epistles*.

Here the distributive pronominal adjectives, *each*, *either*, *neither*, and *every*, are ungrammatically connected with verbs of the plural number.

None, which is a compound of *no one*, is manifestly singular: but it is sometimes improperly connected with a plural verb.

None were permitted to enter the holy precincts, without confessing, by their servile bonds and suppliant posture, the immediate presence of the sovereign deity.—*Gibbon's History of the Roman Empire*.

No nation gives greater encouragements to learning than we do, yet at the same time *none are* so injudicious in the application.—*Goldsmith on Polite Learning*.

3. Grammatical Errors in the use of Participles.

Among the number of grammatical errors, may we be permitted to reckon the use of the past time active, as the participle perfect or passive, in those verbs which admit of a more complete and systematic form.

I had no sooner drank, but I found a pimple rising in my forehead.—*Addison, Tatler.*

Notwithstanding the prophetic predictions of this critic, I do not find that any science hath *throve* among us of late, so much as the minute philosophy.—*Berkeley's Minute Philosopher.*

Had he *wrote* English poetry in so unenlightened a period, the world would have lost his refined diction and harmonious versification.—*Warton's Observations on Spencer.*

I will also allow, that you hit the manner of Horace, and the *aly* delicacy of his wit, more exactly than I, or than any other man who has *writ* since his time.—*Lyttleton's Dialogues of the Dead.*

In this respect, the seeds of future divisions were *sow'd* abundantly.—*Bolingbroke's Dissertation on Parties.*

The court of Augustus had not *wore* off the manners of the republic.—*Hume's Essays.*

A free constitution, when it has been *shook* by the iniquity of former administrations.—*Bolingbroke's Idea of a Patriot King.*

He is God in his friendship, as well as his nature, and therefore we sinful creatures are not *took* upon advantages, nor consumed in our provocations.—*South's Sermons.*

Which some philosophers, not considering so well as I, have *mistook* to be different in their causes.—*Swift's Tale of a Tub.*

The greater regard was *shew'd*, and the expectations raised higher, as these were of a base nature, or of a more noble, thriving, or innocent quality.—*Arbuthnot's Congress of Bees.*

Moses tells us, that the fountains of the earth were *broke* open or *clave* asunder.—*Burnet's Theory of the Earth.*

I easily foresee, that, as soon as I lay down my pen, this nimble operator will have *stole* it.—*Swift's Tale of a Tub.*

By this expedient, the public peace of libraries, might certainly have been preserved, if a new species of controversial books had not *arose* of late years.—*Swift's Battle of the Books.*

The steps which lead to perfection are many; and we are at a loss on whom to bestow the greatest share of our praise; on the first or on the last who may have *bore* a part in the progress.—*Ferguson's History of Civil Society.*

In these examples, the past time active is used instead of the perfect participle. This confusion should upon every occasion be scrupulously avoided. The English language admits not of any great variety of termination; but of such as it does admit, we ought always to avail ourselves. It is certainly of advantage that the different modifications of verbs should be properly distinguished from each other.

Before we conclude this branch of the subject, it will be proper to warn the reader against permitting a verb to succeed a participle in such an ungraceful manner as appears in the following passages.

The author is informed, that the bookseller has prevailed on several gentlemen to write some explanatory notes, for the goodness of which he is not to answer; *having never seen any of them, nor intends it, till they appear in print.*—*Swift's Tale of a Tub.*

Nor is it then a welcome guest, *affording* only an uneasy sensation, and *brings* always with it a mixture of concern and compassion.—*Fielding's Essay on Conversation.*

4. *Grammatical Errors in the use of Adjectives.*

Adjectives which have a comparative or superlative signification, do not admit the addition of the words *more, most*, or of the comparative or superlative terminations *er, est*. The following passages, therefore, are liable to exception.

The last are, indeed, *more preferable*, because they are founded on some new knowledge or improvement in the mind of man.—*Addison, Spectator.*

The *chiefest* of which was known by the name of Archon among the Grecians.—*Dryden's Life of Plutarch.*

The two *chiefest* properties of air, its gravity and elastic force, have been discovered by mechanical experiments.—*Arbuthnot's Essay on Mathematical Learning.*

The *chiefest* and *largest* are removed to certain magazines they call libraries.—*Swift's Battle of the Books.*

The *extremest* parts of the earth were meditating a submission.—*Atterbury's Sermons.*

When only two objects are compared together, it is, improper to use the superlative degree. It is proper to say the *more* elegant of the two; the *most* elegant of the three. This obvious rule has, however, been neglected by various writers of eminence.

This was in reality the *easiest* manner of the two.—*Shaftesbury's Advice to an Author.*

The adjective *antiquarian* is not unfrequently used as a substantive; but the more legitimate form is *antiquary*.

Adjectives are sometimes improperly used as adverbs.

I shall endeavour to live hereafter *suitable* to a man in my station.—*Addison, Spectator.*

The queen having changed her ministry *suitable* to her own wisdom.—*Swift, Examiner.*

He behaved himself *conformable* to that blessed example.—*Sprat's Sermons.*

His expectations run high; and the fund to supply them is *extreme* scanty.—*Lancaster's Essay on Delicacy.*

I can never think so very *mean* of him.—*Bentley's Dissertation on Phalaris.*

The art of pronouncing with propriety and grace being calculated to make the sound an echo to the sense, *scarce* admits of any other general rule.—*Kames's Elements of Criticism.*

In these Examples, the idiom of the language requires the adverbs, *suitably*, *conformably*, *extremely*, *meanly*, and *scarcely*.

5. *Grammatical Errors in the use of negative and disjunctive Participles.*

That *neither* partiality or prejudice appear: but that truth may every where be sacred.—*Dryden's Life of Plutarch.*

There is another use that, in my opinion, contributes rather to make a man learned than wise, and is *neither* capable of pleasing the understanding or imagination.—*Addison on Medals.*

These, like a hand with an inscription, can point out the straight way upon the road, but can *neither* tell you the next turnings, resolve your doubts, or answer your questions, like a guide that has traced it over, and perhaps knows it as well as his chamber.—*Temple on Ancient and Modern Learning.*

He was early charged by Asinius Pollio as *neither* faithful or exact.—*Ledwick's Antiquities of Ireland.*

The legitimate correspondent of *neither* is *nor*.

We need not, *nor do not*, confine the purposes of God.—*Bentley's Sermons.*

In the growth and stature of souls as well as bodies, the common productions are of different sizes, that occasion no gazing, *nor no wonder*.—*Temple on Ancient and Modern Learning.*

I'll prove by twenty-five substantial reasons, that you're no composer, *nor know no more* of music, than you do of algebra.—*Arbuthnot, Harmony in an Uproar.*

Nor is danger ever apprehended in such a government from the violence of the sovereign, *no more* than we commonly apprehend danger from thunder or earthquakes.—*Hume's Essays.*

In each of these sentences, there is a double negative, which amounts to an affirmative.

II. FOREIGN IDIOMS.

The use of such constructions as belong to the idiom of another language, is, like every species of

affectation, nauseous and disgusting.* An author may sometimes happen to admit them through mere inadvertency; but he will more frequently have recourse to them, in order to display his erudition.

The king soon found reason to *repent* him of his provoking such dangerous enemies.—*Hume's History of England*.

The popular lords did not fail to *enlarge themselves* on the subject.—*Macaulay's History of England*.

Solomon was of this mind; and I make no doubt, but he made as wise and true proverbs as any body has done since; *Him* only *excepted*, who was a much greater and wiser man than Solomon.—*Tillotson's Sermons*.

Removing the term from Westminster, *sitting the parliament*, was illegal.—*Macaulay's History of England*.

I shall here subjoin some examples of prepositions, which, if not applied according to the idiom of other languages, are at least applied contrary to the general usage of our standard writers.

The only actions *to* (upon) which we have always seen, and still see all of them *intent*, are such as tend to the destruction of one another —*Burke's Vindication of Natural History*.

To (with) which, as Bishop Burnet tells us, the prince of Orange was willing to comply.—*Bolingbroke's Dissertation on Parties*.

He had been perplexed with a long compliance *to* (with) foreign manners.—*Sprat's Life of Cowley*.

Your character, which I, or any other writer, may now value ourselves *by* (upon) drawing, will probably be dropt, on account

* "Dryden had a vanity, unworthy of his abilities, to shew, as may be suspected, the rank of the company with whom he lived, by the use of French words, which had then crept into conversation; such as *fraicheur* for *coolness*, *jougue* for *turbulence*, and a few more, none of which the language has incorporated or retained. They continue only where they stood first, perpetual warnings to future innovaters."—*Johnson's Life of Dryden*.

of the antiquated style and manner they are delivered in.—*Swift on the English Tongue.*

The discovery he made and communicated *with* (to) his friends.—*Swift's Tale of a Tub.*

The people being only convoked upon such occasions, *as*, by this institution of Romulus, fell *into* (under) their cognizance.—*Swift's Contests and Dissensions in Athens and Rome.*

Not from any personal hatred *to* them, but in justification *to* (of) the best of queens.—*Swift, Examiner.*

The wisest princes need not think it any diminution *to* (of) their greatness, or derogation *to* (from) their sufficiency to rely upon counsel.—*Bacon's Essays.*

A supercilious attention to minute formalities, is a certain indication of a little mind, conscious *to* (of) the want of innate dignity.—*Hawkeworth's Almorán and Hamet.*

He found the greatest difficulty *of* (in) writing.—*Hume's History of England.*

The esteem which Philip had conceived *of* (for) the ambassador.—*Ibid.*

The greatest difficulty was found *of* (in) fixing just sentiments.—*Ibid.*

The Christians were driven out of all their Asiatic possessions, in acquiring *of* which (*in acquiring which*) incredible numbers of men had perished.—*Robertson's View of Society.*

You know the esteem I have *of* (for) his philosophy.—*Kames's Law Tracts.*

He is so resolved *of* (on) going to the Persian Court.—*Bentley's Dissert. on Themistocles's Epistles.*

Neither the one nor the other shall make me swerve *out of* (from) the path which I have traced to myself.—*Bolingbroke's Letter to Wyndham.*

I do likewise dissent *with* (from) the Examiner.—*Addison, Whig Examiner.*

Dr. Johnson (*with* (from) whom I am sorry to differ in opinion) has treated it as a work of merit.—*Scott's Critical Essays.*

Ovid, whom ye accuse *for* (of) luxuriancy of verse.—*Dryden on Dramatic Poesy.*

If policy can prevail *upon* (over) force.—*Addison's Travels.*

This effect, we may safely say, no one beforehand could have promised *upon*.—*Hume's History of England*.

A greater quantity may be taken from the heap, without making any sensible alteration *upon* (in) it.—*Hume's Essays*.

Every office of command should be intrusted to persons of (in) whom the parliament shall confide.—*Macaulay's History of England*.

All of which required abundance of finesse and delicatessen to manage with advantage, as well as a strict observance *after* (of) times and fashions.—*Swift's Tale of a Tub*.

The memory of Lord Peter's injuries produced a degree of hatred and spite, which had a much greater share of (in) inciting him, than regards *after* (for) his father's commands.—*Swift's Tale of a Tub*.

III. NEW AND OBSOLETE WORDS.

On this subject, I shall take the liberty of quoting a passage from Dr. Armstrong, but without professing to adopt all the opinions which it contains.

"It is the easiest thing imaginable to coin new words. The most ignorant of the mobility are apt to do it every day, and are laughed at for it. What best can justify the introducing a new word, is necessity, where there is not an established one to express your meaning. But, while all the world understands what is meant by the word *pleasure*, which sounds very well too, what occasion can there be for saying *voluptu*?"

"Nothing can deform a language so much as an inundation of new words and phrases. It is, indeed, the readiest way to demolish it. If there is any need to illustrate the barbarous effects which a mixture of new words must produce, only consider how a discourse, patched all over with sentences in different languages, would sound; or how oddly it would strike

you in a serious conversation to hear, from the same person, a mixture of all the various dialects and tones of the several counties of the three kingdoms; though it is still the same language. To make it sensible to the eye; how greatly would a mixture of Roman, Italic, Greek, and Saxon characters deform a page. A picture imitating the style of different masters, which is commonly called a Gallery of Painters, can never be pleasing for the same reasons,—want of union and harmony.

“The present licentious humour of coining and borrowing words seems to portend no good to the English language; and it is grievous to think with what *volupty* two or *Poetatarorencouroac** eminent personages have *opiniatred* the *inchoation* of such *futile* barbarisms.

“In short, the liberty of coining words ought to be used with great modesty. Horace, they say, gave but two, and Virgil only one to the Latin tongue, which was squeamish enough not to swallow those, even from such hands, without some reluctance.

“Instead of creating a parcel of awkward new words, I imagine it would be an improvement to degrade many of the old ones from their peerage. I am but a private man, and without authority: but an absolute prince, if he were of my opinion, would make it capital ever to say *encroach* or *encroachment*, or any thing that belongs to *encroaching*. I would commit *inculcate*, for all its Latinity, to the care of the paviors; and it should never appear above ground again.—If you have the least sympathy with the human ear, never say *purport* while you breathe; nor *betwixt*, ex-

* An American word for the number *three*.

cept you have first repeated *between* till we are quite tired of it. *Methinks* strongly resembles the broken language of a German in his first attempts to speak English. *Methought* lies under the same objection, but it sounds better.

"It is full time that *froward* should be turned out of all good company, especially as *perverse* is ready at hand to supply its place. *Vouchsafe* is a very civil gentleman; but as his courtesy is somewhat old-fashioned, we wish he would *deign*, or *condescend*, or *be pleased*, to retire.

"From what rugged road, I wonder, did *swerve* deviate into the English language?—But this *subject matter*!—In the name of every thing that is disgusting and detestable, what is it? Is it one or two ugly words? What is it? Confound me if ever I could guess! Yet one dares hardly peep into a preface, for fear of being stared in the face with this nasty *subject matter*."*

CHAPTER III.

Of Propriety of Style.

PROPRIETY of style stands opposed to vulgarisms or low expressions, and to words and phrases which would be less significant of the ideas we mean to convey. An author may be deficient in propriety, either by making choice of such words as do not express the idea which he intends, but some other which only

* Armstrong's Essays.

resembles it; or such as express that idea, but not fully and completely. He may also be deficient in this respect, by making choice of words or phrases, which habit has taught us to regard as mean and vulgar.

All that I propose in relation to this subject is, to collect a considerable number of vulgar phrases, from the writings of different authors.

These and many other particulars might easily *choke* the faith of a philosopher, who believed no more than what he could deduce from the principles of nature.—*Dryden's Life of Plutarch.*

The kings of Syria and Egypt, the kings of Pergamus and Macedon, without intermission, *worried* each other for above two hundred years.—*Burke's Vindication of Natural Society.*

Besides his having attained such a *mastery* in the Greek, Latin, and French languages, he is a very good philosopher, and, in general, possesses all the branches of erudition, except the mathematics.—*Spence's Life of Blacklock.*

I need say no more concerning the *drift* of these letters.—*Aikin's Letters to his Son.*

Archbishop Tillotson is too often careless and languid; and is much *outdone* by Bishop Atterbury, in the music of his periods.—*Blair's Rhetoric.*

Every year a new flower in his judgment *beats* all the old ones, though it is much inferior to them both in colour and shape.—*Mandeville on the Nature of Society.*

I am wonderfully pleased when I meet with any passage in an old Greek or Latin author, that is not *blown upon*, and which I have never met with in a quotation.—*Addison, Spectator.*

His name must *go down* to posterity with distinguished honour in the public records of the nation.—*Hurd's Life of Warburton.*

We enter into their gratitude towards those faithful friends who did not desert them in their difficulties; and we heartily *go along* with their resentment, against those perfidious traitors who injured, abandoned, or deceived, them.—*Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments.*

Alarmed by the ungoverned, and, in him, unprecedented, emotions of Edgar, he *had been to Beech Park.*—*D'Arblay's Camilla.*

It was but *of a piece*, indeed, that a ceremony conducted in defiance of humanity, should be founded in contempt of justice.—*Melmoth's Letter of Fitzosborne.*

It so happened that a controversy was agitated with great vehemence between those friends of long continuance, Addison and Steele.—*Johnson's Life of Addison.*

It is well if the reader, without rejecting *by the lump*, endeavour patiently to gather the plain meaning.—*Kames's Elements of Criticism.*

Rabelais had too much *game* given him *for satire* in that age by the customs of courts and of convents, of processes and of wars, of schools and of camps, of romances and legends.—*Temple on Poetry.*

One would think there was (*were*) more sophists than one, *had a finger* in this volume of letters.—*Bentley on Socrates's Epistles.*

I had as lief say a thing after him as after another.—*Lowth's Letter to Warburton.*

If all these were exemplary in the conduct of their lives, things would soon *take a new face*, and religion receive a mighty encouragement.—*Swift on the Advancement of Religion.*

Nor would he do it to maintain debate, or shew his wit, but plainly tell me *what stuck with him.*—*Burnet's Life of Rochester.*

Content, therefore, I am, my lord, that Britain stands in this respect as she now does. Able enough she is at present to *shift for herself*—*Shaftesbury's Letter concerning Design.*

Much ado there has been, many words spent, many disputes have been raised upon this argument.—*Temple on Poetry.*

What is it but a kind of rack that forces men to say *what they have no mind to?*—*Cowley's Essays.*

Time hangs heavy on their hands; they know not how to employ it, or *what to make of themselves.*—*Logan's Sermons.*

This is one among the many reasons, which render biography *the most agreeable kind of reading in the world.*—*Roberts, Looker-on.*

A perfect union of wit and judgment is *one of the rarest things in the world*—*Burke on the Sublime and Beautiful*.

Whoever is in the least acquainted with Grecian history, must know that their legislator, by the severity of his institutions, formed the Spartans into a robust, hardy, valiant, nation, *made for war*.—*Leland's History of Philip*.

He therefore *made* rhyming tragedies, till, by the prevalence of manifest propriety, he *seems* to have grown ashamed of *making* them any longer.—*Johnson's Life of Dryden*.

From that time he resolved to *make* no more translations.—*Johnson's Life of Pope*.

It is my design to comprise in this short paper, the substance of those numerous dissertations the critics have *made* on the subject.—*Pope's Discourse on Pastoral Poetry*.

A few reflections on the rise and progress of our distemper, and the rise and progress of our cure, will help us of course to *make* a true judgment.—*Bolingbroke's Dissertation on Partise*.

This application of the verb *make* is awkward, as well as familiar. To make tragedies, to make translations, to make dissertations, to make judgments, are expressions which should never be admitted into a dignified composition.

A vulgar expression, says Longinus, is sometimes much more significant than an elegant one.* This may readily be granted: but however significant it may be, no expression that has a tendency to create sensations of disgust, will by a judicious writer, be thought worthy of admission.

The following quotation will serve to show how the most beautiful descriptions of poetry may be deformed by the introduction of one low or vulgar expression.

'Tis night, dread night, and weary Nature lies
So fast as if she never were to rise;
No breath of wind now whispers thro' the trees,
No noise at land, nor murmur in the seas;

* Longinus de Sublimitate, § xxxi.

Lean wolves forget to howl at night's pale noon,
No wakeful dogs bark at the silent moon,
Nor bay the ghosts that glide with horror by
To view the caverns where their bodies lie;
The ravens perch, and no presages give,
Nor to the windows of the dying cleave;
The owls forget to scream; no midnight sound
Calls drowsy Echo from the hollow ground:
In vaults the walking fires extinguish'd lie;
The stars, heav'n's sentries, *wink* and seem to die.—*Lee*.

CHAPTER IV.

Of Precision of Style.

THE third quality which enters into the composition of a perspicuous style, is precision. This implies the retrenching of all superfluity of expression. A precise style exhibits an exact copy of the writer's ideas. To write with precision, though this be properly a quality of style, he must possess a very considerable degree of distinctness in his manner of thinking. Unless his own conceptions be clear and accurate, he cannot convey to the minds of others a clear and accurate knowledge of the subject which he treats.

Looseness of style, which is properly opposed to precision, generally arises from using a superfluity of words. Feeble writers employ a multitude of words to make themselves understood, as they imagine, more distinctly: but, instead of accomplishing this purpose, they only bewilder their readers. They are sensible

that they have not caught an expression calculated to convey their precise meaning; and therefore they endeavour to illustrate it by heaping together a mass of ill-consorted phrases. The image which they endeavour to present to our minds, is always viewed double; and no double image can be viewed distinctly. When an author tells me of his hero's *courage* in the day of battle, the expression is precise, and I understand it fully. But if, for the sake of multiplying words, he should afterwards extol his *fortitude*, my thoughts immediately begin to waver between these two attributes. In thus endeavouring to express one quality more strongly, he introduces another. *Courage* resists danger; *fortitude* supports pain. The occasion of exerting each of these qualities is different: and being led to think of both together, when only one of them should be presented to me, my view is rendered unsteady, and my conception of the great object indistinct.

An author may be perspicuous, without being precise. He uses proper words, and proper arrangements; but as his own ideas are loose and general, he cannot express them with any degree of precision. Few authors in the English language are more clear and perspicuous than Archbishop Tillotson and Sir William Temple; yet neither of them can pretend to much precision. They are loose and diffuse: and very often do not select such expressions as are adapted for conveying simply the idea they have in view: it is frequently associated with some kindred notion.

All subjects do not require to be treated with the same degree of precision. It is requisite that in every species of writing, this quality should in some measure, be perceptible; but we must at the same time

be upon our guard, lest the study of precision, especially in treating subjects which do not absolutely require it, should betray us into a dry and barren style; lest, from the desire of pruning more closely, we retrench all copiousness and ornament. A deficiency of this kind may be remarked in the serious compositions of Swift.

To unite copiousness with precision, to be flowing and graceful, and at the same time correct and exact in the choice of every word, is one of the highest and most difficult attainments in writing. Some species of composition may require more of copiousness and ornament; others more of precision and accuracy; and even the same composition may, in different parts, require a difference of style. But these qualities must never be totally sacrificed to each other.

"If (says Dr. Armstrong) I were to reduce my own private idea of the best language to a definition, I should call it the shortest, clearest, and easiest; way of expressing one's thoughts, by the most harmonious arrangement of the best chosen words, both for meaning and sound. The best language is strong and expressive, without stiffness or affectation; short and concise, without being either obscure or ambiguous; and easy and flowing, and disengaged, without one undetermined or superfluous word."*

The want of precision is an unpardonable error in a writer who treats of philosophical subjects. On this account, the style of Lord Shaftesbury is highly exceptionable. The noble author seems to have been well acquainted with the power of words; those which he employs are generally proper and sonorous; and his arrangement is often judicious. His defect in

* Armstrong's Essays.

precision is not so much imputable to indistinctness of conception, as to perpetual affectation. He is fond to excess of the pomp and parade of language; he is never satisfied with expressing any thing clearly and simply; he must always give it the dress of state and majesty. Afraid of delivering his thoughts arrayed in a mean and ordinary garb, and allured by an appearance of splendour, he heaps together a crowd of superfluous words, and inundates every idea which he means to express with a torrent of copious loquacity. Hence perpetual circumlocutions, and many words and phrases employed to describe what would have much better been described by one alone. If he has occasion to introduce any author, he very rarely mentions him by his proper name. In the treatise entitled *Advice to an Author*, he employs two or three successive pages in descanting upon Aristotle, without naming him in any other manner than as "the master critic," "the prince of critics," "the consummate philologist," "the grand master of art," "the mighty genius and judge of art." In the same manner, "the grand poetic sire," "the philosophical patriarch," and "his disciple of noble birth and lofty genius," are the only names by which he condescends to designate Homer, Socrates, and Plato. This method of distinguishing persons is extremely affected, but it is not so contrary to precision, as the frequent circumlocutions which he employs to express the powers and affections of the mind. In one passage, he denominates the moral faculty, "that natural affection and anticipating fancy, which marks the sense of right and wrong." When he has occasion to mention self-examination, or reflection on our own conduct, he speaks of it as "the act of a man's dividing

himself into two parties, becoming a self-dialogist, entering into partnership with himself, and forming the dual number practically within himself."

In the following paragraph he wishes to show, that by every vicious action, we injure the mind as much as a man would injure his body by swallowing poison, or inflicting on himself a wound.

Now, if the fabric of the mind or temper appeared to us such as it really is; if we saw it impossible to remove hence any one good or orderly affection, or to introduce an ill or disorderly one, without drawing on, in some degree, that dissolute state which, at its height, is confessed to be so miserable; it would then, undoubtedly, be confessed, that since no ill, immoral, or unjust action, can be committed, without either a new inroad and breach on the temper and passions, or a further advancing of that execution already done; whoever did ill, or acted in prejudice of his integrity, good nature, or worth, would, of necessity, act with greater cruelty towards himself, than he who scrupled not to swallow what was poisonous, or who, with his own hands, should voluntarily mangle or wound his outward form or constitution, natural limbs or body.—*Shaftesbury's Enquiry concerning Virtue.*

Such superfluity of words is disgusting to every reader of a correct taste; and produces no other effect than that of embarrassing and perplexing the sense. To commit a bad action, is first, "to remove a good and orderly affection, and to introduce an ill or disorderly one;" next it is, "to commit an action that is ill, immoral, or unjust; and then "to do ill, or to act in prejudice of integrity, good-nature, or worth." Nay, so very simple a thing as a man's wounding himself, is, "to mangle or wound his outward form or constitution, natural limbs or body."

CHAPTER V.

Of Synonymous Words.

MANY words are accounted synonymous which are not so in reality; and indeed it may reasonably be disputed whether two words can be found in any language, which express precisely the same idea. However closely they may approximate to each other in signification, still can the discriminating eye of the critic discover a line of separation between them. They agree in expressing one principal idea; but always express it with some diversity in the circumstances. They are varied by some accessory idea which severally accompanies each of the words, and which forms the distinction between them.

As they are like different shades of the same colour, an accurate writer can employ them to great advantage, by using them so as to heighten and to finish the picture which he gives us. He supplies by the one what was wanting in the other, to the force, or to the lustre of the image which he means to exhibit. But, with a view to this end, he must be extremely attentive to the choice which he makes of them. For the generality of writers are apt to confound them with each other; and to employ them with promiscuous carelessness, merely for the sake of filling up a period, or of diversifying the language. By using them as if their signification were precisely the same, they unwarily involve their ideas in a kind of mist.

Many instances might be given of a difference in meaning between words reputed synonymous. The

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Now, if the fabric of the mind or temper appears as it really is; if we saw it impossible to remove a good or orderly affection, or to introduce an ill one, without drawing on, in some degree, that which, at its height, is confessed to be so miserable; then, undoubtedly, be confessed, that since no ill or unjust action, can be committed, without either a breach on the temper and passions, or a failure of that execution already done; whoever did in prejudice of his integrity, good nature, or a necessity, act with greater cruelty towards himself, who scrupled not to swallow what was poisoned by his own hands, should voluntarily mangle or wound his own form or constitution, natural limbs or body.

Enquiry concerning Virtue.

Such superfluity of words is disagreeable to a reader of a correct taste; and produces more than that of embarrassing and perplexing. To commit a bad action, is first, to injure the mind and orderly affection, and to introduce an ill or disorderly one; next it is, "to commit an ill, immoral, or unjust; and to do so in prejudice of integrity."

shows his opposition to a
 applauded; a gentleman ac-
 and is forgiven; a prisoner
 ch he stands accused, and

ar.—Austerity relates to the
 ity of thinking; rigour of
 ty is opposed effeminacy; to
 rigour clemency. A hermit is
 must severe in his application
 ge rigorous in his sentences.

No two words are more fre-
 ough their signification is suf-
 tinct. Authentic refers to the
 ent; genuine, to the connexion
 on and its reputed author. We
 s of the authenticity of Buchan-
 of the genuineness of the Poems
 But the authenticity of Ossian's
 notes the authority of those poems
 t of view.

Capacity relates to the mind's
 receiving impressions; ability to its
 active exertions. The Earl of Cla-
 man of extensive capacity, stored his
 iety of ideas; which circumstance con-
 the successful exertion of his vigorous

n respects the action: habit
 e mean the frequent repeti-
 abit, the effect which that
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 n the streets, one acquires a

few which I shall select from Dr. Blair and Mrs. Piozzi,* may themselves be of some use; and they will besides serve to show the necessity of attending, with the utmost care, to the exact significations of words, if ever we would write with propriety or precision.

To abandon, forsake, relinquish, give up, desert, leave, quit.—A man forsakes his mistress, abandons all hope of regaining her lost esteem, relinquishes his pretensions in favour of another; gives up a place of trust which he held under government, deserts his party, leaves his parents in affliction, and quits the kingdom for ever.

To abhor, detest.—To abhor imports, simply, strong dislike; to detest imports also strong disapprobation. A man abhors being in debt; he detests treachery.

Active, assiduous, sedulous, diligent, industrious.—The king is happy who is served by an active minister ever industrious to promote his country's welfare, nor less diligent to obtain intelligence of what is passing at other courts, than assiduous to relieve the cares of his royal master, and sedulous to study the surest methods of extending the commerce of the empire abroad, while he lessens all burdens upon the subjects at home.

To avow, acknowledge, confess.—Each of these words signifies the affirmation of a fact, but in very different circumstances. To avow, supposes the person to glory in it; to acknowledge, supposes a small degree of delinquency, which the acknowledgment compensates; to confess, supposes a higher degree of

* Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres. Piozzi's British Synonymy. This lady's design is commendable: but her work is full of errors.

criminality. A patriot avows his opposition to a corrupt ministry, and is applauded; a gentleman acknowledges his mistake, and is forgiven; a prisoner confesses the crime of which he stands accused, and is punished.

Austerity, severity, rigour.—Austerity relates to the manner of living; severity of thinking; rigour of punishing. To austerity is opposed effeminacy; to severity relaxation; to rigour clemency. A hermit is austere in his life; a casuist severe in his application of religion or law; a judge rigorous in his sentences.

Authentic, genuine.—No two words are more frequently confounded; though their signification is sufficiently clear and distinct. Authentic refers to the character of a document; genuine, to the connexion between any production and its reputed author. We speak with correctness of the authenticity of Buchanan's History, and of the genuineness of the Poems ascribed to Ossian. But the authenticity of Ossian's poems, properly denotes the authority of those poems in a historical point of view.

Capacity, ability.—Capacity relates to the mind's susceptibility of receiving impressions; ability to its power of making active exertions. The Earl of Clarendon, being a man of extensive capacity, stored his mind with a variety of ideas; which circumstance contributed to the successful exertion of his vigorous abilities.

Custom, habit.—Custom respects the action: habit the actor. By custom, we mean the frequent repetition of the same act; by habit, the effect which that repetition produces on the mind or body. By the custom of often walking in the streets, one acquires a habit of idleness.

A difficulty, an obstacle.—A difficulty embarrasses, an obstacle stops us. The first generally expresses something arising from the nature and circumstances of the affair; the second, something arising from a foreign cause. Philip found difficulty in managing the Athenians, on account of their natural dispositions; but the eloquence of Demosthenes was the great obstacle to his designs.

To distinguish, separate.—We distinguish what we do not wish to confound with another thing; we separate what we wish to remove from it. Objects are distinguished from each other by their qualities. They are separated by the distance of time or place.

Entire, complete.—A thing is entire by wanting none of its parts; complete by wanting none of its appendages. A man may be master of an entire house; which has not one complete apartment.

Equivocal, ambiguous.—An equivocal expression has one sense open, and designed to be understood; another sense concealed, and understood only by the person who uses it. An ambiguous expression has apparently two senses, and leaves us at a loss which of them to apply to it. An equivocal expression is used with an intention to deceive; an ambiguous one, when purposely adopted, with an intention to give full information. An honest man will never employ an equivocal expression: a confused man may often utter ambiguous terms without any design.

Haughtiness, disdain.—Haughtiness is founded on the high opinion we entertain of ourselves; disdain, on the mean opinion we entertain of others.

To invent, to discover.—To invent, signifies to produce something totally new; to discover, signifies to find out something which was before hidden. Galileo

invented the telescope; Harvey discovered the circulation of the blood.

Only, alone.—Only imports that there is no other object of the same kind; alone imports being unaccompanied by any other object. An only child is one that has neither brother nor sister; a child alone, is one that is left by itself. There is a difference, therefore, in precise language, between these two phrases: "Virtue only makes us happy;" and "Virtue alone makes us happy." Virtue only makes us happy, implies that nothing else can do it. Virtue alone makes us happy, implies that virtue, unaccompanied with other advantages, makes us happy. In the following sentence, Mr. Gibbon has employed the two words as if they were perfectly synonymous: "Of the nineteen tyrants, Tetricus *only* was a senator; Piso *alone* was a noble."

Pride, vanity.—Pride makes us esteem ourselves; vanity makes us desire the esteem of others. A man may be too proud to be vain. "Pride," says the learned and eloquent Dr. Brown, "is often confounded with vanity, from which it differs, both in its essence and its effects. The vain, as well as the proud man, is enamoured of his own qualities and circumstances, and deems them superior to those of others. But, as the constant object of the former is applause, he is continually displaying his talents, his virtues, or his dignity, in order to obtain it. Sensible of his dependence on mankind, for that commendation at which he is always aiming, he endeavours to insure their admiration, although he excite, at the same time, their contempt. The proud man, on the contrary, disdains even commendation as a favour, but claims it as a debt, and demands respect as an homage to which he

is entitled. Reverence is not a prize which he must win, but a property which it is injustice to withhold from him. The vain are objects of ridicule, but not of detestation. The proud are both contemptible and odious."*

To remark, observe.—We remark, in the way of attention, in order to remember; we observe, in the way of examination, in order to judge. A traveller remarks the most striking objects he sees; a general observes all the motions of his enemy.

Surprised, astonished, amazed, confounded.—I am surprised at what is new or unexpected; I am astonished at what is vast or great; I am amazed at what is incomprehensible; I am confounded by what is shocking or terrible.

Tranquillity, peace, calm.—Tranquillity respects a situation free from trouble, considered in itself; peace, the same situation with respect to any causes that might interrupt it; calm, with respect to a disturbed situation going before, or succeeding it. A good man enjoys tranquillity in himself; peace with others; and calm after the storm.

Wisdom, prudence.—Wisdom leads us to speak and act with propriety. Prudence prevents our speaking or acting improperly. A wise man employs the most proper means for success; a prudent man the safest means to avoid being brought into danger.

* Sermons by William Laurence Brown, D. D., Principal of Marischal College, Aberdeen. Edinb. 1803.—8vo. In the essential qualities of originality and energy, these sermons are greatly superior to Dr. Blair's. The fourth of them, "On the Nature, the Causes, and the Effects, of Indifference with regard to Religion," I consider as the best discourse which I have ever read.

With, by.—Both these particles express the connexion between some instrument, or means of effecting an end, and the agent who employs that instrument or those means: *with* expresses a more close and immediate connexion; *by* a more remote one. The proper distinction in the use of these particles is elegantly marked in a passage of Dr. Robertson's History of Scotland. When one of the old Scottish kings was making an inquiry into the tenure *by* which his nobles held their lands, they started up, and drew their swords: "*By* these," said they, "we acquired our lands, and *with* these we will defend them." The following instances will further exemplify the distinction, "He was killed *by* a stone which fell from the steeple." "He was killed *with* a stone *by* Peter."

CHAPTER VI.

Of the Structure of Sentences.

OF a sentence or period, various definitions have been given. According to Aristotle, it is "a quantity of sound which bears a certain signification according to its combination, and of which some detached part is also significant."* Against this definition some objections might perhaps be urged: it is, however, sufficient for our present purpose.

* "Λόγος δὲ ἐστὶ φωνῆ σημαντικὴ κατὰ συνθήκην, ἥς τῶν μερῶν τι σημαντικὸν ἐστὶ πεχωρισμένων.—Aristot. de Interpretatione, cap. iv.

A sentence always implies some one complete proposition, or enunciation of thought: but every sentence does not confine itself to a single proposition.

A sentence consists of component parts, which are called its members; and as these members may be either few or many, and may be connected in several different ways, the same thought, or mental proposition, may often be either compressed into one sentence, or distributed into two or three; without the material breach of any rule.

Upon surveying the annals of past ages, it seems that the greatest geniuses have been subject to this historical darkness; as is evident in those great lights of antiquity, Homer and Euclid, whose writings indeed enrich mankind with perpetual stores of knowledge and delight; but whose lives are for the most part concealed in impenetrable oblivion.—*Taylor's Life of Orpheus*.

The same meaning may thus be expressed in three sentences: "Upon surveying the annals of past ages, it seems that the greatest geniuses have been subject to this historical darkness. This is evidently the case with regard to those great lights of antiquity, Homer and Euclid. The writings of these illustrious authors enrich mankind with perpetual stores of knowledge and delight; but their lives are for the most part concealed in impenetrable oblivion."

With regard to the precise length of sentences, no positive rule can be laid down: in this the writer must always be regulated by his own taste. A short period is lively and familiar: a long period, requiring more attention, makes an impression grave and solemn. There may be an extreme on either side.* By means

* A series of short periods produces a very disagreeable effect in poetry. The subsequent quotations will justify this assertion.

of too many short sentences, the sense is divided and broken, the connexion of thought weakened, and the memory burdened, by being presented with a long succession of minute objects. And, on the other hand, by the too frequent use of long periods, an author overloads the reader's ear and fatigues his attention. In general, a writer ought to study a due mixture of long and short periods, which prevents an irksome uniformity, and entertains the mind with a variety of impressions. Long sentences cannot be properly introduced till the reader's attention is completely engaged. They ought never to be placed at the beginning of discourses of any description.

The French critics make a proper distribution of style into the two general classes of *periodique* and

So saying, they approach'd

The gate. The centinel, soon as he heard
Thitherward footsteps, with uplifted lance
Challenged the darkling travellers. At their voice,
He draws the strong bolts back, and painful turns
The massy entrance. To the careful chiefs
They pass. At midnight of their extreme state
Counselling they sat, serious and stern. To them
Conrade. Assembled warriors! &c. [Southey.

Nor in the field of war

The Greeks excel by discipline alone,
But from their manners. Grant thy ear, O king,
The diff'rence learn of Grecian bands, and thine,
The flow'r, the bulwark of thy pow'rful host
Are mercenaries. These are canton'd round
Thy provinces. No fertile field demands
Their painful hand to turn the fallow glebe.
Them to the noon-day toil, no harvest calls.
The stubborn oak along the mountain's brow
Sinks not beneath their stroke. With careful eyes
They mark not how the flocks or heifers feed.—[Glover.

coupe. In the *style periodique*, the sentences are composed of several members linked together, and depending upon each other, so that the sense is not completely unfolded till the close.

Something of a doubtful mist still hangs over these Highland traditions; nor can it be entirely dispelled by the most ingenious researches of modern criticism: but if we could with safety indulge the pleasing supposition that Fingal lived, and that Ossian sung, the striking contrast of the situation and manners of the contending nations might amuse a philosophic mind. The parallel would be little to the advantage of the more civilized people, if we compared the unrelenting revenge of Severus with the generous clemency of Fingal; the timid and brutal cruelty of Caracallâ, with the bravery, the tenderness, the elegant genius of Ossian; the mercenary chiefs who, from motives of fear or interest, served under the imperial standard, with the free born warriors who started to arms at the voice of the king of Morven; if, in a word, we contemplated the untutored Caledonians, glowing with the warm virtues of nature, and the degenerate Romans, polluted with the mean vices of wealth and slavery.—*Gibbon's History of the Roman Empire*

It is well known that constitutions framed for the preservation of liberty, must consist of many parts; and that senates, popular assemblies, courts of justice, magistrates of different orders, must combine to balance each other, while they exercise, sustain, or check, the executive power. If any part is struck out, the fabric must totter or fall; if any member is remiss, the others must encroach. In assemblies constituted by men of different talents, habits, and apprehensions, it were something more than human that could make them agree in every point of importance; having different opinions and views, it were want of integrity to abstain from disputes; our very praise of unanimity, therefore, is to be considered as a danger to liberty. We wish for it at the hazard of taking in its place the remissness of men grown indifferent to the public; the venality of those who have sold the rights of their country; or the servility of others, who give implicit obedience to a leader, by whom their minds are

subdued. The love of the public, and respect to its laws, are the points on which mankind are bound to agree; but if, in matters of controversy, the sense of any individual or party is invariably pursued, the cause of freedom is already betrayed.—*Ferguson's History of Civil Society.*

This is the more pompous, musical, and oratorical mode of composition.

In the *style couplet*, the sense is expressed in short independent propositions, each complete within itself.

The women, in their turn, learned to be more vain, more gay, and more alluring. They grew studious to please and to conquer. They lost somewhat of the intrepidity and fierceness which before were characteristic of them. They were to affect a delicacy, and a weakness. Their education was to be an object of greater attention and care. A finer sense of beauty was to arise. They were to abandon all employments which hurt the shape and deform the body. They were to exert a fancy in dress and ornament. They were to be more secluded from observation. A greater play was to be given to sentiment and anticipation. Greater reserve was to accompany the commerce of the sexes. Modesty was to take the alarm sooner. Gallantry, in all its fashions, and in all its charms, was to unfold itself.—*Stuart's View of Society.*

But how can these considerations consist with pride and insolence, which are repugnant to every social and virtuous sentiment? Do you, proud man! look back with complacency on the illustrious merits of your ancestors! Shew yourself worthy of them by imitating their virtues, and disgrace not the name you bear by a conduct unbecoming a man. Were your progenitors such as you are fond to represent them, be assured that, if they rose from the grave, they would be ashamed of you. If they resembled yourself, you have no reason to boast of them, and wisdom will dictate to you to cultivate those manners which alone can dignify your family. Nothing can be conceived more inconsistent than to exult in illustrious ancestry, and to do what must disgrace it, than to mention with ostentation the distinguished merits of progenitors, and to exhibit a

melancholy contrast to them in character. Will you maintain that, because your forefathers were good and brave men, you are authorised to abandon the pursuit of all that is decent and respectable? For, to this sentiment, the pride of family, whenever it forms a characteristic feature, never fails to lead the mind. In a word, considered in its specific nature, and carried to its utmost extent, it lays down this maxim, "That ancestry gives a right to dishonour and degrade itself."

After all, what is high birth? Does it bestow a nature different from that of the rest of mankind? Has not the man of ancient line, human blood in his veins? Does he not experience hunger and thirst? Is he not subject to disease, to accidents, and to death; and must not his body moulder in the grave, as well as that of the beggar? Can he or any of his race, "redeem his brother by any means, or give God a ransom for him?" Go back only a few generations, of which the number is much smaller than you imagine it to be, and you arrive at Adam, the progenitor of us all.—*Brown's Sermons.*

This mode of writing generally suits gay and easy subjects. It is more lively and striking than the *style periodique*. According to the nature of the composition, and the general character which it ought to bear, the one or the other of these may be predominant. But in every species of composition, they ought to be blended with each other. By a proper mixture of short and long periods, the ear is gratified, and a certain sprightliness is joined with majesty: but when a sort of regular compass of phrases is employed, the reader soon becomes fatigued with the monotony. A train of sentences, constructed in the same manner, and with the same number of members, whether long or short, should never be allowed to follow each other in close uninterrupted succession. Nothing is so tiresome as perpetual uniformity.

In the construction and distribution of his sentences, Lord Shaftesbury has shewn great art. It has

already been hinted that he is often guilty of sacrificing precision of style to pomp of expression; and that his whole manner is strongly marked with a stiffness and affectation which render him very unfit to be considered as a general model. But as, his ear was fine, and as he was extremely attentive to every species of elegance, he was more studious and successful than any other English author in producing a proper intermixture of long and short sentences, with variety and harmony in their structure.

Having offered these observations with regard to sentences in general, I shall now enter upon a particular consideration of the most essential properties of a perfect sentence. These seem to be clearness and precision, unity, strength, and harmony.

CHAPTER VII.

Of Clearness and Precision in the Structure of Sentences.

IN the arrangement of a period, as well as in the choice of words, the chief object which ought to be kept in view is perspicuity. This should never be sacrificed to any other beauty. The least degree of ambiguity ought to be avoided with the greatest care; it is a fault almost sufficient to counterbalance every beauty which an author may happen to possess.— Ambiguity arises from two causes; from an improper choice of words, or an improper collocation of

them.* The first of these causes has already been fully considered.

In the collocation of words, the first thing to be studied is a rigid conformity to the rules of grammar, as far as these can guide us. But as the system of English grammar is not altogether complete, an ambiguous arrangement of words may frequently be observed where we cannot discover a transgression of any grammatical rule. The relation which the words or members of a period bear to each other, cannot be pointed out in English, as in Greek and Latin, by means of their terminations: it must be ascertained by the position in which they stand. Hence an important rule in the structure of a sentence is, that the words or members most intimately connected, should be placed as near to each other as is consistent with elegance and harmony, so that their mutual relation may be plainly perceived.

I. Ambiguities are frequently occasioned by the improper use of the adverb. This part of speech, as its name implies, is generally placed close or near to the word which it modifies or affects; and its propriety and force depend on its position. By neglecting to advert to this circumstance, writers frequently convey a different meaning from what they intend.

Sixtus the Fourth was, if I mistake not, a great collector of books at least.—*Bolingbroke on the Study of History.*

At least, should not be connected with *books*, but with *collector*.

The Romans understood liberty, at least, as well as we.—*Swift on the Adv. of Religion.*

* The reader will find this subject treated by Condillac; *Traite de l'Art d'Ecrire*, liv. i. chap. xi.

These words are susceptible of two different interpretations, according as the emphasis, in reading them, is laid upon *liberty* or *at least*. In the former case they will signify, that whatever other things we may understand better than the Romans, *liberty*, at least, was one thing which they understood as well as we. In the latter they will import, that liberty was understood, *at least*, as well by them as by us. If this last was the author's meaning, the ambiguity would have been avoided, and the sense rendered independent of the manner of pronouncing, by arranging the words thus: "The Romans understood liberty, as well, at least, as we."

By greatness, I do not *only* mean the bulk of any single object, but the largeness of a whole view.—*Addison, Spectator*.

Here the position of the adverb *only*, renders it a limitation of the word *mean*; as if the author intended to say that he did something besides meaning. The ambiguity may be removed by the following arrangement: "By greatness, I do not mean the bulk of any single object only, but the largeness of a whole view."

In common conversation, the tone and emphasis which we use in pronouncing such words as *only*, *wholly*, *at least*, generally serve to show their reference, and to render the meaning clear and obvious: and hence we acquire a habit of throwing them in loosely in the course of a period. But, in written discourses, which address the eye, and not the ear, greater accuracy is requisite. These adverbs should be so connected with the words which they are meant to qualify, as to prevent all appearance of ambiguity.

II. Words expressing things connected in the thought, should be placed as near together as possi-

ble. This rule is derived immediately from the principles of human nature; in which we may discover a remarkable propensity to place together objects that are in any manner connected. When objects are arranged according to their connexions, we have a sense of order: when they are placed fortuitously, we have a sense of disorder.

The connective parts of sentences are the most important of all, and require the greatest care and attention; for it is by these chiefly, that the train of thought, the course of reasoning, and the whole progress of the mind, in continued discourse of all kinds, is laid open; and on the right use of these depend perspicuity, the greatest beauty of style.

The bad effect of a violent separation of words or members which are intimately connected, will appear from the following examples.

The English are naturally fanciful, and very often disposed, by that gloominess and melancholy of temper which is so frequent in our nation, to many wild notions and visions, to which others are not so liable.—*Addison, Spectator.*

Here the verb *disposed* is, by a long clause, violently separated from the subject to which it refers. This harsh construction is the less excusable, as the fault is easily prevented by the following arrangement: "The English are naturally fanciful, and by that gloominess and melancholy of temper which is so frequent in our nation, are often disposed to many wild notions, to which others are not liable."

No mortal author, in the ordinary fate and vicissitude of things, knows to what use his works may, some time or other, be applied.—*Spectator.*

It cannot be impertinent or ridiculous, therefore, in such a country, whatever it might be in the abbey of St. Real's, which

was Savoy, I think; or in Peru, under the Incas, where Garcilasso de la Vega says it was lawful for none but the nobility to study; for men of all degrees to instruct themselves in those affairs wherein they may be actors, or judges of those that act, or controllers of those that judge.—*Bolingbroke on the Study of History.*

If Scipio, who was naturally given to women, for which anecdote we have, if I mistake not, the authority of Polybius, as well as some verses of Nævius, preserved by Aulus Gellius, had been educated by Olympias at the court of Philip, it is improbable that he would have restored the beautiful Spaniard.—*Ibid.*

May we not conjecture, for it is but conjecture, something more.—*Bolingbroke's Dissert. on Parties.*

The works of Lord Bolingbroke abound with improper arrangements of this kind.

The foregoing rule is very frequently transgressed in the disposition of pronouns. The relative *who* or *which*, when introduced in order to avoid the repetition of the name of some person or thing, ought always to be placed as near as possible to the name of that person or thing. Where it is out of its proper place, we constantly find something awkward or disjointed in the structure of the sentence.

This kind of wit was very much in vogue among our countrymen, about an age or two ago, *who* did not practise it for any oblique reason, but purely for the sake of being witty.—*Addison, Spectator.*

In this sentence the meaning is sufficiently obvious; but the construction would be evidently improved by disposing of the circumstance, "about an age or two ago," in such a manner as not to separate the relative *who* from its antecedent *countrymen*. "About an age or two ago, this kind of wit was very much in vogue among our countrymen, who did not practice it for

any oblique reason, but purely for the sake of being witty."

It is folly to pretend to arm ourselves against the accidents of life, by heaping up treasures, *which* nothing can protect us against, but the good providence of our heavenly Father.—*Sherlock's Sermons.*

This construction implies, that it is *treasures*, and not the *accidents of life*, from which no mortal can protect himself by his own exertions. The sentence ought to have stood thus: "It is folly to pretend, by heaping up treasures, to arm ourselves against the accidents of life, against which nothing can protect us, but the good providence of our heavenly Father."

Thus I have fairly given you, Sir, my own opinion, as well as that of a great majority of both houses here, relating to this weighty affair; upon which I am confident you may securely reckon.—*Swift on the Sacramental Test.*

Here the author seems to advise his correspondent to reckon upon this weighty affair; though he certainly meant that it was the great majority upon which he might reckon. The obscurity will be removed by arranging the sentence thus: "Thus, Sir, I have given you my own opinion relating to this weighty affair, as well as that of a great majority of both houses here; upon which I am confident you may securely reckon."

I allude to the article *BLIND* in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, published at Edinburg in the year 1783, *which* was written by him.—*Mackenzie's Life of Blacklock.*

This arrangement leaves us to suppose that Dr. Blacklock was the sole author of a book to which he only contributed an essay on blindness. His biographer's meaning might have been expressed thus: "I allude to the article *BLIND*, which was written by

him, and published at Edinburgh in the year 1783, in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*."

We no where meet with a more glorious and pleasing shew in nature, than what appears in the heavens at the rising and setting of the sun, *which* is wholly made up of those different stains of light, that shew themselves in clouds of a different situation.—*Addison, Spectator*.

Which is here designed to connect with the word *shew* as its antecedent; but it is removed to such a distance, that without a careful attention to the sense, we should be led, by the rules of syntax, to refer it to the rising and setting of the sun, or to the sun itself. Hence an indistinctness is thrown over the whole sentence.

From a habit of saving time and paper, *which* they acquired at the university, they write in so diminutive a manner, with such frequent blots and interlineations, that they are hardly able to go on without perpetual hesitations, or extemporary expletives.—*Swift's Letter to a Young Gentleman*.

The author certainly does not mean that the clergymen of whom he speaks, had acquired time and paper at the university, but that they had there acquired a habit of saving time and paper. The sentence ought to have run thus: "From a habit which they have acquired at the university of saving time and paper, they write in so diminutive a manner, with such frequent blots," &c.

III. Another great source of ambiguity is the too frequent repetition of pronouns, when we have occasion to refer to different persons. The subsequent examples will serve to illustrate this observation.

They were summoned occasionally by *their* kings, when compelled by *their* wants and by *their* fears to have recourse to *their* aid.—*Robertson's View of Society*.

Men look with an evil eye upon the good that is in others; and think that their reputation obscures *them*, and that *their* commendable qualities do stand in *their* light: and therefore *they* do what they can to cast a cloud over *them*, that the bright shining of *their* virtues may not obscure *them*.—*Tillotson's Sermons*.

The Earl of Falmouth and Mr. Coventry were rivals, *who* should have most influence with the duke, *who* loved the earl best, but thought the other the wiser man, *who* supported Pen, *who* disoblged all the courtiers, even against the earl, *who* condemned Pen as a fellow of no sense. — *Clarendon's Continuation*.

All which with the king's and queen's so ample promises to *him* (the treasurer) so few hours before the conferring the place on another, and the Duke of York's manner of receiving *him* (the treasurer) after *he* (the chancellor) had been shut up with *him* (the duke) as *he* (the treasurer) was informed, might very well excuse *him* (the treasurer) from thinking *he* (the chancellor) had some share in the affront *he* (the treasurer) had undergone.—*Ibid*.

Of these sentences, the first three are not involved in much obscurity, though they are certainly disagreeable and inelegant; but the last cannot possibly be understood without a careful recollection of the contents of several pages preceding.

IV. A circumstance ought never to be placed between two capital members of a period: for by such an arrangement, we are left doubtful to which of the two the circumstance refers. But when it is interjected between parts of the member to which it properly belongs, the ambiguity is removed, and those members are kept distinct from each other.

Let the virtue of a definition be what it will, *in the order of things*, it seems rather to follow than to precede our inquiry, of which it ought to be considered as the result.—*Burke on the Sublime and Beautiful*.

This arrangement leaves us dubious, whether the clause, "in the order of things," refers to what is gone before, or to what follows. The ambiguity may be thus removed: "Let the virtue of a definition be what it will, it seems, in the order of things, rather to follow than to precede our inquiry, of which it ought to be considered as the result."

The knight, seeing his habitation reduced to so small a compass, and himself in a manner shut out of his own house, *upon the death of his mother*, ordered all the apartments to be flung open, and exorcised by his chaplain.—*Addison, Spectator.*

This may either imply, that upon the death of his mother, the knight was shut out of his own house, or that upon the death of his mother, he ordered all his apartments to be exorcised. As the latter was the author's meaning, the sentence ought to have stood thus:

"Seeing his habitation reduced to so small a compass, and himself in a manner shut out of his own house, the knight, upon the death of his mother, ordered all the apartments to be flung open, and exorcised by his chaplain."

Though our brother is upon the rack, *as long as we ourselves are at ease*, our senses will never inform us of what he suffers. *Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments.*

Better thus: "Though our brother is upon the rack, our senses will never, as long as we ourselves are at ease, inform us of what he suffers."

This work in its full extent, *being now afflicted with an asthma, and finding the powers of life gradually declining*, he had no longer courage to undertake.—*Johnson's Life of Savage.*

This construction would lead us to conclude that it was the work, and not the poet, that was afflicted with an asthma. The following arrangement removes

the ambiguity: "Being now afflicted with an asthma, and finding the powers of life gradually declining, he had no longer courage to undertake this work in its full extent."

Since it is necessary that there should be a perpetual intercourse of buying and selling, and dealing upon credit, *where fraud is permitted or connived at, or hath no law to punish it*, the honest dealer is always undone, and the knave gets the advantage.—*Swift's Travels of Gulliver.*

This arrangement conveys the idea that people "deal upon credit" in those places only "where fraud is permitted." The ambiguity might have been avoided by the insertion of a few additional syllables. "Since it is necessary that there should be a perpetual intercourse of buying and selling, and dealing upon credit, *the consequence is, that* where fraud is permitted or connived at, or hath no law to punish it, the honest dealer is always undone, and the knave gets the advantage."

The minister who grows less by his elevation, *like a little statue on a mighty pedestal*, will always have his jealousy strong about him.—*Bolingbroke's Dissertation on Parties.*

This construction leaves it doubtful whether the object introduced by way of simile, relate to the subsequent or to the preceding clause. Better thus: "The minister who, like a little statue placed on a mighty pedestal, grows less by his elevation, will always have his jealousy strong about him."

Instead of being able to employ troops trained to skill in arms, and to military subordination, *by regular discipline*, monarchs were obliged to depend on such forces as their vassals conducted to their standard in consequence of their military tenures.—*Robertson's View of Society.*

Here the author's meaning is sufficiently obvious; yet, from the construction, we might conclude that a little regular discipline had been administered to monarchs, in order to make them depend on such forces as their vassals conducted to their standard. The sentence may be thus arranged: "Instead of being able to employ troops trained by regular discipline, to skill in arms, and to military subordination, monarchs were obliged to depend on such forces as their vassals conducted to their standard in consequence of their military tenures."

We shall now endeavour, *with clearness and precision*, to describe the provinces once united under their sway — *Gibbon's History of the Roman Empire*.

The following arrangement removes this ambiguity: "We shall now endeavour to describe, with clearness and precision, the provinces once united under their sway."

Perhaps it may be thought that some of the foregoing objections are too scrupulous, and that the defect of perspicuity is easily supplied by accurate punctuation. It may be granted that punctuation will sometimes remove an ambiguity; but it can never produce that peculiar beauty which is perceived when the sense is clearly and distinctly unfolded by means of a happy arrangement. Such influence does this beauty possess, that, by a natural transition of perception, it is communicated to the very sound of the words, so as in appearance to improve the music of the period.

Having now considered the principal circumstances which contribute to perspicuity, and the various modes in which the laws relating to it may be transgressed, I shall conclude the subject by inquiring

whether it be possible that this essential quality of style may be carried to excess.

It has been alleged that too much perspicuity has a tendency to cloy the reader, and that it becomes irksome by affording no opportunity of exertion to the rational powers of the mind. This objection arises from the error of confounding two dissimilar objects, the common and the clear, and thence very naturally their contraries, the new and the obscure. If you entertain your reader solely or chiefly with thoughts which are either trite or obvious, he will soon be filled with languor and disgust. You present no uncommon images or sentiments to his mind, you give him little or no information, and consequently afford neither exercise to his reason, nor entertainment to his fancy. In what we read, and what we hear, we always expect to find something with which we were formerly unacquainted. And when this expectation is disappointed, we discover nothing to repay our attention. We are soon disgusted with such a trifling minuteness of narration, description, or argument, as an ordinary apprehension renders superfluous. The reason is, not that any thing is said with too much perspicuity, but that many things are said of which no person is ignorant. Thus, when Quintius Curtius had informed us that the shouts of the Macedonian army were reverberated by the cliffs of the mountains; and the vast forests, it was certainly very unnecessary to add, "*quippe semper circumjecta nemora petræque, quantamcumque accipere vocem, multiplicato sono referunt.*" Reasons that are known to every one, ought to be taken for granted: to express them is childish, and interrupts the narration.

The practice of collecting trite maxims and common-place sentiments is finely ridiculed in an essay of Swift's; from which I shall select one passage: "All rivers go to the sea, but none return from it. Xerxes wept when he beheld his army; to consider that in less than an hundred years they would be all dead. Anacreon was choked with a grape-stone; and violent joy kills as well as violent grief. There is nothing constant in this world but inconstancy; yet Plato thought, that if Virtue would appear in the world in her own native dress, all men would be enamoured with her. But now, since interest governs the world, and men neglect the golden mean, Jupiter himself, if he came on earth, would be despised, unless it were as he did to Danae, in a golden shower. For men, now-a-days, worship the rising sun, and not the setting."*

It is futility in the thought, and not perspicuity in the language, which constitutes the fault of such performances as those to which I have here alluded. There is as little hazard that a composition shall be faulty in the latter respect, as that a mirror shall be too faithful in reflecting the images of objects, or that the glasses of a telescope shall be too transparent. At the same time, it is not to be dissembled that, with inattentive readers, darkness frequently passes for depth. On the contrary, to be perspicuous, and to be superficial, are regarded by them as synonymous. But it is not surely to their absurd notions that our language ought to be adapted.

Before I dismiss this subject, it may, however, be proper to observe, that every species of composition

*Swift's Critical Essay upon the Faculties of the Mind.

does not admit of an equal degree of perspicuity. In the sublime ode, for example, it is impossible, or at least very difficult, to reconcile the utmost perspicuity with that force and vivacity which are indispensably requisite in such performances. But even in this case, though the genius of the higher species of lyric poetry may render obscurity to a certain degree excusable, nothing can ever constitute it a positive excellence.

CHAPTER IX.

On Unity in the Structure of Sentences.

IN compositions of every description, a certain degree of unity is absolutely requisite. There must always be some leading principle to form a chain of connexion between the component parts. In single sentences, which are members of a composition, the same principle must also be predominant.

I. Objects that have no intimate connection should never be crowded into one sentence. A sentence or period ought to express one entire thought or mental proposition; and different thoughts ought to be separated in the expression, by being placed in different periods. It is improper to connect in language things which are separated in reality. Of errors against this rule I shall produce a few examples.

In this uneasy state, both of his public and private life, Cicero was oppressed by a new and cruel affliction, the death of his beloved Tullia; which happened soon after her divorce

from Dolabella, whose manners and humours were entirely disagreeable to her.—*Middleton's Life of Cicero.*

The principal object in this sentence, is the death of Tullia, which was the cause of her father's affliction. The time when the event took place is, without any impropriety, pointed out in the course of the sentence; but the subjunction of Dolabella's character is foreign to the main object. It breaks the unity and compactness of the period, by presenting a new picture to the reader.

He is supposed to have fallen, by his father's death, into the hands of his uncle, a vintner, near Charing Cross, who sent him for some time to Dr. Busby, at Westminster; but, not intending to give him any education beyond that of the school, took him, when he was well advanced in literature, to his own house, where the Earl of Dorset, celebrated for patronage of genius, found him by chance, as Burnet relates, reading Horace, and was so well pleased with his proficiency, that he undertook the care and cost of his academical education.—*Johnson's Life of Prior.*

This single sentence contains no inconsiderable number of the particulars which are known with regard to the personal history of Prior. He is conducted from the house of his father to that of his uncle; sent to Westminster school, where he makes considerable progress in literature; is taken from school, and remains at his uncle's; obtains the patronage of the Earl of Dorset, who, if Burnet may be credited, found him reading Horace; and, last of all, is about being sent to the university, under the protection of that nobleman.

The usual acceptation takes profit and pleasure for two different things, and not only calls the followers or votaries of them by several names of busy and idle men, but distinguishes the faculties of the mind that are conversant about them, call-

ing the operations of the first wisdom, and of the other wit, which is a Saxon word, that is used to express what the Spaniards and Italians call *ingenio*, and the French *esprit*, both from the Latin; but I think wit more peculiarly signifies that of poetry, as may occur upon remarks on the Runic language.—*Temple on Poetry.*

Before the writer arrives at the close of this sentence, he seems to have forgotten what he set out with inculcating.

A right honourable author, having had occasion to mention the influence of the sun, expatiates in the following manner.

It breaks the icy fetters of the main, where vast sea-monsters pierce through floating islands, with arms that can withstand the chrystal rock; whilst others, who of themselves seem great as islands, are by their bulk alone armed against all but man, whose superiority over creatures of such size and force, should make him mindful of his privilege of reason, and force him humbly to adore the great composer of these wondrous frames, and the author of his own superior wisdom.—*Shaftesbury's Moralists.*

At the commencement of this sentence, the sun is introduced breaking the icy fetters of the main; the sun is succeeded by sea-monsters piercing through floating islands *with their arms*; and after these have played their part, man is brought into view, to receive a long and serious admonition.

To this succeeded that licentiousness which entered with the Restoration; and from infecting our religion and morals, fell to corrupt our language: which last was not like to be much improved by those who at that time made up the court of King Charles the second; either such who had followed him in his banishment, or who had been altogether conversant in the dialect of those fanatic times; or young men, who had been educated in the same company; so that the court, which used to be the standard of propriety and correctness of speech, was then,

and I think hath ever since continued, the worst school in England for that accomplishment; and so will remain till better care be taken in the education of our young nobility; that they may set out into the world with some foundation of literature, in order to qualify them for patterns of politeness.—*Swift on the English Tongue.*

How many different facts, reasonings, and observations, are here presented to the mind!

Authors who are fond of long periods, very frequently fall into errors of this kind. As a proof of this assertion, we need only inspect the historical works of Bishop Burnet and Lord Clarendon. Even in later and more correct writers, we sometimes find a period extended to such a length, and comprehending so many particulars, as more justly to deserve the appellation of a discourse, than of a sentence. But heterogeneous particulars may occasionally be crowded into periods of no uncommon length. The following quotations will illustrate this observation.

Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant: also our bed is green.—*Song of Solomon.*

His own notions were always good; but he was a man of great expence.—*Burnet's History of his own Time.*

I single him out among the moderns, because he had the foolish presumption to censure Tacitus; and to write history himself; and your lordship will forgive this short excursion in honour of a favourite author.—*Bolingbroke on the Study of History.*

In serious composition, words conveying physical and moral ideas unconnected with each other, ought never to be forced into an artificial union.

Germania omnis a Gallis Rhætisque et Pannoniis, Rheno et Danubio fluminibus, a Sarmatis Dacisque, mutuo metu aut moribus separatur.—*Tacitus de Moribus Germanorum.*

The alliance of Chosroes, King of Armenia, and the long tract of mountainous country, in which the Persian cavalry was of little service, opened a secure entrance into the heart of Media.—*Gibbon's History of the Roman Empire.*

On every side they rose in multitudes, armed with rustic weapons, and with irresistible fury.—*Ibid.*

But when an author wishes to place some object in a ludicrous point of view, a combination of this kind may have a good effect.

On l'a donc delivree sur le champ, et de la fosse et de toutes ses apprehensions.—*Hamilton, Quatre Facardins.*

After much patience, and many a wistful look, Pennant started up, seized the wig, and threw it into the fire. It was in flames in a moment, and so was the officer, who ran to his sword.—*Walpoliana.*

He is surely much happier in this noble condescension, and must acquire a more perfect knowledge of mankind, than if he kept himself aloof from his subjects, continually wrapt up in his own importance and imperial fur.—*Moore's View of Society in France.*

She even believed that the journey would prove a remedy for her asthmatic complaints; her desire of a matrimonial establishment was full as efficacious as the vinegar of Hannibal, and the Alps melted before it.—*Huxley's Essay on Old Maids.*

Mr. Dannel and Mrs. Albrey, who neither of them, at any time, took the smallest notice of what she said, passed on, and left the whole weight both of her person and her complaints to Camilla.—*D'Arblay's Camilla.*

II. Parentheses ought never to be introduced in the middle of sentences: and indeed the unity and the beauty of a period can never be complete where they are introduced in any situation. At present they are not so frequently used as they were formerly; and it is to be hoped that the time will arrive when they shall be entirely excluded. They are at best, nothing more than a perplexed and awkward method of disposing

of some thought which the writer wants art to introduce in its proper place. In poetical composition, perhaps they may occasionally be admitted with happy effect; but if they are long or frequent, they will be found still more disagreeable than in prose. The pages of Churchill, who displays a strong but rude vein of poetry, are entangled with innumerable parentheses.

It seems to me, that in order to maintain the moral system of the world at a certain point far below that of ideal perfection, (for we are made capable of conceiving what we are incapable of attaining) but, however, sufficient upon the whole to constitute a state easy and happy, or at the worst tolerable: I say, it seems to me, that the author of nature has thought fit to mingle from time to time, among the societies of men, a few, and but a few, of those on whom he is graciously pleased to bestow a large proportion of the ethereal spirit than is given in the ordinary course of his providence to the sons of men.—*Bolingbroke's Spirit of Patriotism.*

Into this sentence, by means of a parenthesis, and other interjected circumstances, the author has contrived to thrust so many particulars, that he is obliged to have recourse to the sorry phrase, *I say*, the occurrence of which may always be regarded as an infallible mark of a clumsy and unskilful construction. Such a phrase may be excusable in conversation; but in polished writings, it is altogether unpardonable.

The most astonishing instance of this respect, so frequently paid to Nothing, is when it is paid (if I may so express myself) to something less than nothing; when the person who receives it is not only void of the qualities for which he is respected, but is in reality notoriously guilty of vices directly opposite to the virtues, whose applause he receives. This is, indeed, the highest degree of Nothing, or, (if I may be allowed the word) the Nothingest of all Nothings.—*Fielding's Essay on Nothing.*

Here the effect of the author's wit would be rendered more powerful by the omission of these qualifying parentheses. Instead of pointing the sentiment, they have a quite opposite tendency. In compositions of this kind, no apology need be offered for such expressions as Fielding has here employed.

The subsequent quotations will farther illustrate the disagreeable effect of parentheses.

It was an ancient tradition, that when the capital was founded by one of the Roman kings, the god Terminus (who presided over boundaries, and was represented, according to the fashion of that age, by a large stone) alone, among all the inferior deities, refused to yield his place to Jupiter himself.—*Gibbon's History of the Roman Empire*.

The description Ovid gives of his situation, in that first period of his existence, seems (some poetical embellishments excepted) such as, were we to reason *a priori*, we should conclude he was placed in.—*Lancaster's Essay on Delicacy*.

When this parliament sat down, (for it deserves our particular observation that both houses were full of zeal for the present government, and of resentment against the late usurpations) there was but one party in parliament; and no other party could raise its head in the nation.—*Bolingbroke's Dissertation on Parties*.

It will, therefore, be very reasonable to allow on their account as much as, added to the losses of the conqueror, may amount to a million of deaths, and then we shall see this conqueror, the oldest we have on records of history (though, as we have observed before, the chronology of these remote times is extremely uncertain) opening the scene by a destruction of at least one million of his species, unprovoked but by his ambition, without any motives but pride, cruelty, and madness, and without any benefit to himself (for Justin expressly tells us that he did not maintain his conquests,) but solely to make so many people, or so many distant countries, feel experimentally, how severe a scourge Providence intends for the human race, when he gives one man the power over many, and arms

his naturally impotent and feeble rage with the hands of millions, who know no common principle of action but a blind obedience to the passions of their ruler.—*Burke's Vindication of Natural Society.*

This work is professedly written in imitation of Lord Bolingbroke's style and manner.

III. Sentences ought never to be extended beyond what seems their natural close. Every thing that is one, should have a beginning, a middle, and an end. It need not here be observed that, according to the laws of rhetoric, an unfinished sentence is no sentence at all. But we frequently meet with sentences which may be said to be more than finished. When we have arrived at what we expected was to be their conclusion, some circumstance which ought to have been omitted, or to have been otherwise disposed of, suddenly presents itself. Such appendages tend very much to destroy the beauty, and to diminish the strength of a period.

And here it was often found of absolute necessity to inflame or cool the passions of the audience; especially at Rome, where Tully spoke, and with whose writings young divines (I mean those among them who read old authors) are more conversant than with those of Demosthenes; who, by many degrees, excelled the other; at least as an orator.—*Swift's Letter to a Young Gentleman.*

This is as weak a sentence as could possibly be written. But without endeavouring to point out the whole of its deformity, I shall only advert to the circumstance for which it is here introduced. The natural close of the period is at the last semicolon; and when we have proceeded thus far, we expect no additional information. But the halting clause, "at least as an orator," is unexpectedly intruded upon us.

Speaking of Burnet and Fontenelle:

The first could not end his learned treatise without a pane-

gyric of modern learning and knowledge in comparison of the ancient; and the other falls so grossly into the censure of the old poetry, and preference of the new, that I could not read either of these strains without indignation, which no quality among men is so apt to raise in me as self-sufficiency, the worst composition out of the pride and ignorance of mankind.—*Temple on Ancient and Modern Learning.*

Of this sentence, the word *indignation* forms the natural conclusion: what follows is foreign to the proposition with which the author set out.

All the world acknowledgeth the *Æneid* to be most perfect in its kind: and, considering the disadvantage of the language, and the severity of the Roman Muse, the poem is still more wonderful; since, without the liberty of the Grecian poets, the diction is so great and noble, so clear, so forcible and expressive, so chaste and pure, that even all the strength and compass of the Greek tongue, joined to Homer's fire, cannot give us stronger and clearer ideas, than the great Virgil hath set before our eyes; some few instances excepted, in which Homer, through the force of genius, hath excelled.—*Felton's Dissertation on the Classics.*

The circumstance so ungracefully appended to this sentence, might be disposed of in the following manner: "All the world acknowledgeth, &c. that, with the exception of some few instances in which Homer, through the force of genius, hath excelled, even all the strength and compass of the Greek tongue, joined to Homer's fire, cannot give us stronger and clearer ideas, than the great Virgil hath set before our eyes."

By way of appendix to this chapter, we may remark, that it is improper to begin a sentence in such a loose manner as appears in the following examples.

As nothing damps or depresses the spirits like great subjection or slavery, either of body or mind; so nothing nourishes, revives, and fortifies them like great liberty. *Which may pos-*

sibly enter among other reasons, of what has been observed about long life being found more in England, than in others of our neighbouring countries.—*Temple on Health and Long Life.*

For this end, I propose to-morrow to set out on a week's task to my labourers, and accept your invitation, if Dion thinks good. *To which I gave consent.—Berkeley's Minute Philosopher.*

So far they oblige, and no farther; their authority being wholly founded on that permission and adoption. *In which we are not singular in our notions.—Blackstone's Commentaries.*

I think it convenient to endeavour, if possible, to remove a violent, and, I think, unreasonable prejudice which men have received against all those who endeavour to make religion reasonable. *As if Bellarmine had been in the right, when he said that faith was rather to be defined by ignorance than by knowledge.—Tillotson's Sermons.*

CHAPTER X.

Of Strength in the Structure of Sentences.

THE strength of a sentence consists in such a disposition of its several words and members, as shall tend most powerfully to impress the mind of the reader with the meaning which the author wishes to convey. To the production of this effect, the qualities of perspicuity and unity are absolutely requisite; but they are not of themselves sufficient. For a sentence may be possessed of perspicuity and unity, and yet, by some unfavourable circumstance in its structure, may be destitute of that strength or vivacity of expression which a more happy arrangement would have produced.

I. A sentence ought to be divested of all redundant words. These may sometimes be consistent with perspicuity and unity; but they are always irreconcilable with strength. It is an invariable maxim, that words which add nothing to the sense, or to the clearness, must diminish the force of the expression.

I look upon it as *my duty*, so far as God hath enabled me, and as long as I keep within the bounds of truth, *of duty*, and of decency.—*Swift's Letters*.

It would certainly be very strange if any man should think it his duty to transgress the bounds of duty.

How many are there by whom these *tidings* of good news were never heard!—*Bolingbroke, Ph. Pr.*

This is tidings of tidings, or news of news.

Never did Atticus succeed better in gaining the *universal* love and esteem of *all* men.—*Spectator*.

This is so clear a proposition, that I might rest the *whole* argument *entirely* upon it.—*Lyttleton on the Conversion of St. Paul*.

One of the two words printed in Italics may be considered as redundant. In the subsequent passage, Lord Lyttleton employs a greater superfluity of words: four of them may be rejected without any detriment to the significancy of the period.

I shall suppose, then, in order to try to account for the vision without a miracle, that as Saul and his company were journeying *along in their way* to Damascus, an extraordinary meteor really did happen.—*Ibid.*

I went home, full of a *great many* serious reflections.—*Guardian*.

It was sufficient to inform us that he went home *full* of serious reflections.

We may here observe, that a principal cause of languid verbosity is the injudicious use of adjectives and epithets. When used sparingly and with judgment,

they have a powerful influence in enlivening the expression; but nothing has more of an opposite effect than a profusion of them. When scattered with too liberal a hand, they lengthen the sentence, without adding proportionate vigour; they betray a violent effort to say something great or uncommon. A profusion of this kind is one of the principal faults in the rich and elegant style of Gibbon.

Adjectives, however, are not always to be regarded as mere epithets. Whatever is necessary for ascertaining the import of either a noun or a verb, whether by adding to the sense, or by limiting it, is something more than an epithet, according to the common acceptance of that term. Thus when I say "the glorious sun," the word *glorious* is an epithet; it expresses a quality, which, being conceived always to belong to the object, is, like all its other qualities, comprehended in the name. But when I say "the meridian sun," the word *meridian* is not barely an epithet; it makes a real addition to the signification, by denoting the sun to be in the station which he always occupies at noon. A similar distinction is to be made between adverbs that are absolutely necessary for the expression of an idea, and those which are introduced for the sole purpose of embellishment.

II. A sentence ought also to be divested of all redundant members. Every member should present a new thought. Yet we sometimes meet with periods in which the last member is nothing more than the echo of the first, or a repetition of it in a different form.

The very first discovery of it strikes the mind with inward joy, and spreads delight through all its faculties.—*Addison, Spectator.*

It is impossible for us to behold the divine works with coldness or indifference, or to survey so many beauties, without a secret satisfaction and complacency.—*Ibid.*

In both these instances, little or nothing is added by the second member of the sentence to what was already expressed in the first.

Neither is any condition of life more honourable in the sight of God than another, otherwise he would be a respecter of persons, which he assures us he is not.—*Swift's Sermon on Mutual Subjection.*

It is evident that this last clause does not a little enervate the thought, as it implies but too plainly, that without this assurance from God himself, we should naturally conclude him to be of a character different from that which he here receives from the preacher.

III. In constructing a sentence, particular attention should be paid to the use of copulatives, relatives, and all the particles employed in transaction and connexion. The gracefulness and strength of a period must in a great measure depend on words of this description. They are the joints and hinges upon which all sentences turn. The various modes of using them are so numerous, that no particular rules respecting them can be formed. We must be directed by an attentive consideration of the practice of standard writers, joined with frequent trials of the different effects produced by a different application of those particles. Without pretending to exhaust the subject, I shall here collect a few observations which seem to be of importance.

What is called splitting of particles, or separating a preposition from the noun which it governs, ought always to be avoided.

As the strength of our cause doth not depend *upon*, so neither is it to be decided *by*, any critical points of history, chronology, or language.—*Berkeley's Minute Philosopher*.

Socrates was invited *to*, and Euripides entertained *at*, his court.—*Leland's History of Philip*.

In such instances, we feel a sort of pain from the revulsion, or violent separation of two things which, by their nature, should be closely united. We are obliged to rest for some time on the preposition itself, which carries no significancy, till it is joined to its proper substantive noun.

Some writers needlessly multiply demonstrative and relative particles, by the frequent use of such phraseology as this: "*There is nothing which* disgusts us sooner than the empty pomp of language." In introducing a subject, or laying down a proposition to which we demand particular attention, this sort of style is very proper. But in the ordinary current of discourse, it is better to express ourselves more simply and briefly, "Nothing disgusts us sooner than the empty pomp of language."

On the other hand, the relative particles are frequently omitted, when the author thinks his meaning may be understood without them.

The faith he professed, and which he became an apostle of, was not his invention.—*Lyttleton on the Conversion of St Paul*.

The following arrangement seems more consistent with strength as well as elegance: "The faith *which* he professed, and of which he became an apostle, was not his invention."

It appears that numbers of the Officers and Soldiers in the camp of Lepidus were prepared for the part (which) they were to act on this occasion.—*Ferguson's History of the Roman Republic*.

The sole evidence (which) we can have of the veracity of a historian, consists in such collateral documents as are palpable to all, and can admit of no falsification.—*Pinkerton's Essay on Medals.*

Though this illiptical style be intelligible, and may be allowed in conversation and epistolary writing, yet in all compositions of a serious or dignified kind, it is unbecoming, except where we have occasional recourse to it, merely for the sake of avoiding the too frequent recurrence of *who* or *which*.

With regard to the copulative particle *and*, several observations are to be made.—It is evident, that the unnecessary repetition of it enfeebles style, and produces an effect similar to that of the vulgar phrase *and so*, which occurs so frequently in common conversation.

The academy set up by Cardinal Richelieu, to amuse the wits of that age and country, and divert them from raking into his politics and ministry, brought this in vogue; and the French wits have for this last age been in a manner wholly turned to the refinement of their language, and indeed with such success, that it can hardly be excelled, and runs equally through their verse and their prose.—*Temple on Poetry.*

And then those who are of an inferior condition, that they labour and be diligent in the work of an honest calling, for this is privately good and profitable unto men, and to their families; and those who are above this necessity, and are in better capacity to maintain good works, properly so called, works of piety, and charity, and justice; that they be careful to promote and advance them, according to their power and opportunity, because these things are publicly good and beneficial to mankind.—*Tillotson's Sermons.*

In the first of these sentences, the conjunction is seven times introduced; in the last, eleven times.

A redundancy of copulatives may be proper upon some occasions.

Dining one day at an alderman's in the city, Peter observed him expatiating after the manner of his brethren, in the praises of his sirloin of beef. "Beef (said the sage magistrate) is the king of meat. Beef comprehends in it, the quintessence of patridge, and quail, and venison, and pheasant, and plumb-pudding, and custard."—*Swift's Tale of a Tub*.

Here the repetition of the conjunction is sufficiently characteristic of the drowsy speaker.

"The army was composed of Grecians, and Carians, and Lycians, and Pamphylians, and Phrygians."

A leisurely survey, which is promoted by the use of so many copulatives, makes the parts seem more numerous than they would appear on a hasty inspection. In the latter case, the army is viewed as one distinct group: in the former, we seem to take an accurate review of the respective troops of each nation.

These are instances in which a multiplicity of conjunctions may be used with propriety: but it is also to be observed, that the total omission of them often produces a good effect. Longinus observes, that it animates a period to drop the copulative;* and he produces the following example from Xenophon: "Closing their shields together, they were impelled, they fought, they slew, they were slain."† I shall quote an instance of the same kind from Cæsar: "Our men, having discharged their javelins, attack with sword in hand; on a sudden the cavalry make their appearance behind; other bodies of men are seen drawing near; the enemies turn their backs; the horsemen meet them in their flight; a great slaughter ensues."‡ From

* Longinus de Sublimitate, § xix.

† Xenophon de Rebus Græcis, lib. iv. nec non Orat. de Agisilao.

‡ Cæsar de Bello Gallico, lib. vii.

these observations it will appear, that an attention to the several cases when it is proper to omit, and when to redouble the copulative, is of considerable importance to all those who study eloquence. The critics both of ancient and modern times, have thought the subject worthy of their notice.

IV. In arranging a sentence, the most important words ought to be placed in that situation in which they will make the strongest impression. Every one must perceive that in all sentences there are certain words of superior importance: and it is equally obvious that those words should stand in a conspicuous and distinguished place. But the precise station which they ought to occupy, cannot be ascertained by any general rule. Their position must vary with the nature of the sentence. Perspicuity must ever be studied in the first place; and the structure of our language allows no great liberty in the choice of collocation. For the most part, the important words are placed at the beginning of the sentence; as in the following examples.

A modern Italian is distinguished by sensibility, quickness, and art, while he employs on trifles the capacity of an ancient Roman; and exhibits now, in the scene of amusement, and in search of a frivolous applause, that fire, and those passions with which Gracchus burned in the forum, and shook the assemblies of a severe people.—*Ferguson's History of Civil Society.*

The state of society, which precedes the knowledge of an extensive property, and the meanneesses which flow from refinement and commerce, is in a high degree propitious to women.—*Stuart's View of Society.*

Human society is in its most corrupted state at that period when men have lost their original independence and simplicity of manners, but have not attained that degree of refinement which introduces a sense of decorum and of propriety in con-

duct, as a restraint on those passions which lead to heinous crimes.—*Robertson's View of Society.*

It seems the most natural order, thus to place in the front that which forms the chief-object of the proposition to be laid down. Sometimes, however, it is of advantage to suspend the meaning for a while, and then unfold it completely at the close of the period.

Why their knowledge is more than ours, I know not what reason can be given, but the unsearchable will of the Supreme Being.—*Johnson's Rasselas.*

On whatever side we contemplate Homer, what principally strikes us, is his wonderful invention.—*Pope's Preface to Homer.*

The Greek and Latin authors possessed the liberty of inversion in a more eminent degree. The genius of the languages in which they wrote, always permitted them to choose the most advantageous situation for every word: and this privilege tended greatly to add force and vivacity to their sentences. The more ancient English writers have endeavoured to imitate them in this respect; but their forced and unnatural constructions often produce obscurity. Our language, as it is now written and spoken, will not admit such liberties. Yet the inverted style may still be employed within certain limits. In the following instance an inverted arrangement of words is adopted with evident propriety.

The praise of judgment Virgil has justly contested with him, but his invention remains yet unrivalled.—*Pope's Preface to Homer.*

It is evident that, in order to give this sentence its due force, by properly contrasting the two capital words *judgment* and *invention*, this is a more happy arrangement than if the author had thus followed the natural order: "Virgil has justly contested with him

the praise of judgment, but his invention remains yet unrivalled."

Such inversions as our language admits, are more frequently practised by some writers than by others; by Shaftesbury, for instance, much more than by Addison. It is to this sort of arrangement that Shaftesbury's style is chiefly indebted for its appearance of strength, dignity, and varied harmony. But if he has more pomp and majesty than Addison, he certainly must be allowed to possess less ease and simplicity, which are beauties highly deserving a writer's attention.

Whether we practise inversion or not, and in whatever part of the sentence we dispose of the most important words, it is always a point of great moment that those words stand clear from others which would entangle them. Thus, when there are any limitations of time, or place, or of any other description, which the principal object of the sentence requires to have connected with it, we must be careful to dispose of them, so as to avoid clouding that object, or burying it under a load of circumstances. This is very happily effected in the following quotation, in which the author is speaking of modern poets, as compared with the ancient.

If, whilst they profess only to please, they secretly advise, and give instruction, they may now, perhaps, as well as formerly, be esteemed with justice the best and most honourable among authors.—*Shaftesbury's Advice to an Author.*

This sentence is skilfully constructed. It contains a great number of circumstances necessary to qualify the meaning; yet these are placed with so much art, that they neither weaken nor embarrass. Let us examine what would be the effect of a different arrange-

ment: "If, whilst they profess to please only, they advise and give instruction, secretly, they may be esteemed the best and most honourable among authors, with justice, perhaps, now, as well as formerly." Here we have precisely the same words and the same sense; but, in consequence of the circumstances being so intermingled as to clog the capital words, the whole becomes perplexed, and totally devoid of grace and strength.

The following sentence contains a great number of circumstances disposed with little skill.

And that it was not peculiar to the gift of language or tongues only, to be given at the moment of its exertion, but common likewise to all the rest, will be shewn probably, on some other occasion, more at large in a particular treatise, which is already prepared by me, on that subject.—*Middleton's Free Inquiry*.

V. Sentences ought never to be concluded with words which make an inconsiderable figure. Such conclusions always have the effect of enfeebling and degrading. There may indeed be sentences in which the stress and significance rest chiefly upon adverbs, prepositions, or some other word of the same kind. In this case, they ought to have a principal place allotted to them. No objection, therefore, can be urged against such an arrangement as appears in this period: "In their prosperity, my friends shall never hear of me; in their adversity, *always*." Here the adverb *always*, being an emphatical word, is so placed, as to make a strong impression. The subsequent quotation furnishes an instance of the same kind.

I sat in my old friend's seat; I heard the roar of mirth and gaiety around me; poor Ben Siltan! I gave thee a tear *then*: accept of one cordial drop that falls to thy memory *now*.—*MacKenzie's Man of Feeling*.

But in the following examples, we find words of a like description occupying the same station, without any acknowledged right to such distinction.

This agreement of mankind is not confined to the taste *solely*.—*Burke on the Sublime and Beautiful*.

The other species of motion are incidentally blended *also*.—*Marrie's Philosophical Arrangements*.

He thinks it much more likely that such a system should continue to be admired and praised in idea, than established in fact; and if it happens ever to be established, he does not imagine it can be supported *long*. *Bolingbroke's Dissertation on Parties*.

Since my late arrival in Ireland, I have found a very unusual, but, I doubt not a very just, complaint concerning the scarcity of money; which occasioned many airy propositions for the remedy of it, and among the rest that of raising some, or all of the coins *here*.—*Temple on the Advancement of Trade*.

We should particularly avoid concluding a period with prepositions which mark the cases of nouns, or which are combined with verbs. It would have a very disagreeable effect to say, "Avarice is a crime which men who pass for wise, are often guilty of." Such phraseology ought on no occasion to be adopted. For besides the want of dignity which arises from those monosyllables being placed at the close, the mind cannot avoid resting for a little upon the word which concludes the sentence: and, as these prepositions have no import of their own, but merely serve to point out the relation of other words, it is disagreeable thus to be left pausing on a word which of itself cannot produce any idea, or present any picture to the fancy.

I therefore thought it necessary to fix and determine the motion of these two words, as I intend to make use of them in the thread of my following speculations, that the reader may conceive rightly what is the subject which I proceed upon.—*Addison, Spectator*.

There need no more than to make such a registry only voluntary, to avoid all the difficulties that can be raised, and which are not too captious, or too trivial to take notice of.—*Temple on Popular Discontents.*

By these means the country loses the expence of many of the richest persons or families at home; and mighty sums of money must needs go over from hence into England, which the great stock of rich native commodities here can make the only amends for.—*Temple on the Advancement of Trade.*

But it is absurd to think of judging either Ariosto or Spenser by precepts which they did not attend to.—*Warton's Observations on Spenser.*

No one pretends to be a judge in poetry or the fine arts, who has not both a natural and cultivated relish for them; and shall the narrow-minded children of earth, absorbed in low pursuits, dare to treat as visionary, objects which they have never made themselves acquainted with?—*Barbaulton the Devotional Taste.*

The pronoun *it* ought as seldom as possible to be placed at the close of a sentence. When it immediately succeeds a verb, its effect is not so disagreeable; but when joined with a preposition, it is intolerable.

When you are pinched with any former, and yet unrepealed act of parliament, you declare that, in some cases, you will not be obliged by *it*.—*Dryden's Epistle to the Whigs.*

I would humbly offer an amendment, that instead of the word Christianity, may be put religion in general; which, I conceive will much better answer all the good ends proposed by the projectors of *it*.—*Swift's Argument against abolishing Christianity.*

Every nature you perceive, is either too excellent to want it, or too base to be capable of *it*.—*Harris's Dialogues concerning Art.*

Although it is not always necessary, that every thing advanced by the speaker, should convey information to the hearer, it is necessary that he should believe himself informed by what is said, ere he can be convinced or persuaded by *it*.—*Campbell's Philosophy of Rhetoric.*

It is surprising that writers who have paid the smallest attention to elegance, should allow the word *it* to conclude two successive periods. Yet instances of this kind sometimes occur.

In like manner, if a person in broad day light were falling asleep, to introduce a sudden darkness would prevent his sleep for that time, though silence and darkness in themselves, and not suddenly introduced, are very favourable to *it*. This I know only by conjecture on the analogy of the senses when I first digested these observations, but I have since experienced *it*.—*Burke on the Sublime and Beautiful*.

The general idea of good or bad fortune, therefore, creates some concern for the person who has met with it; but the general idea of provocation excites no sympathy with the anger of the man who has received *it*. Nature, it seems, teaches us to be more averse to enter into this passion, and, till informed of its cause, to be disposed rather to take part against *it*.—*Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments*.

VI. In the members of a sentence where two objects are either compared or contrasted, some resemblance in the language and construction should be preserved. To illustrate this rule, I shall produce various instances of deviations from it; beginning with resemblances expressed in words which have no resemblance.

I have observed of late, the style of some great *ministers* very much to exceed that of any other *productions*.—*Swift on the English Tongue*.

Instead of *productions*, which bear no resemblance to ministers great or small, the author ought to have employed the word *writers* or *authors*.

I cannot but fancy, however, that this imitation, which passes so currently with other judgments, must at some time or other have stuck a little with your lordship.—*Shaftesbury on Enthusiasm*.

This sentence ought to have stood thus: "I cannot but fancy, however, that this imitation, which passes so currently with *others*, must at some time or other have stuck with *your lordship*."

It is a still greater deviation from congruity, to affect not only variety in the words, but also in the construction. There is a fault of this kind in the following sentence, in which the author is speaking of Shakspeare.

There may remain a suspicion that we over-rate the greatness of his genius, in the same manner as bodies appear more gigantic on account of their being disproportioned and mis-shapen.—*Hume's History of England*.

This is studying variety where the beauty lies in uniformity. The sentence might have been constructed in this manner: "There may remain a suspicion that we over-rate the greatness of his genius, in the same manner as we over-rate the greatness of bodies that are disproportioned and mis-shapen."

Attention should also be paid to the length of members which signify the resembling objects. To produce a resemblance between such members, they ought not only to be constructed in the same manner, but also to be as nearly as possible of the same length. By neglecting this circumstance, the subsequent example is rendered liable to exception.

As the performance of all other religious duties will not avail in the sight of God, *without charity*; so neither will the discharge of all other ministerial duties avail in the sight of men, *without a faithful discharge of this principal duty*.—*Bolingbroke's Dissertation on Parties*.

In the following passage, all the errors are accumulated which a period expressing a resemblance can well admit:

Ministers are answerable for every thing done to the prejudice of the constitution, in the same proportion as the preservation of the constitution in its purity and vigour, or the perverting and weakening it, are of greater consequence to the nation, than any other instances of good or bad government.—*Belingbroke's Dissertation on Parties.*

As resemblance ought to be studied in the words which express two resembling objects, so opposition ought to be studied in the words which express two contrasted objects. The following examples contain deviations from this rule.

A friend exaggerates a man's virtues, an enemy inflames his crimes.—*Addison, Spectator.*

Here the opposition in the thought is neglected in the words, which at first view seem to import, that the friend and the enemy are employed in different matters, without any relation to each other, whether of resemblance or of opposition. The contrast will be better marked by expressing the idea as follows: "A friend exaggerates a man's virtues, an enemy his crimes."

The wise man is happy when he gains his own approbation: the fool when he recommends himself to the applause of those about him.—*Spectator.*

This sentence might have stood thus: "The wise man is happy when he gains his own approbation; the fool, when he gains that of others."

The laughers will be for those who have most wit: the serious part of mankind for those who have most reason on their side.—*Belingbroke's Dissertation on Parties.*

The opposition would have been more completely expressed in this manner: "The laughers will be for those who have most wit; the serious, for those who have most reason on their side."

In the following passage, we find two great poets very skilfully contrasted with each other.

Homer was the greater genius; Virgil the better artist; in the one, we must admire the man, in the other the work. Homer hurries us with a commanding impetuosity; Virgil leads us with an attractive majesty. Homer scatters with a generous profusion; Virgil bestows with a careful magnificence. Homer like the Nile, pours out his riches with a sudden overflow; Virgil, like a river in its banks, with a constant stream.—*Pope's Preface to Homer.*

This picture, however, would have been more finished, if to the Nile some particular river had been opposed.

CHAPTER XI.

Of Harmony in the Structure of Sentences.

ALTHOUGH sound is a quality of much less importance than sense, yet it must not altogether be disregarded. For as sounds are the vehicle of our ideas, there must always be a pretty intimate connexion between the idea which is conveyed, and the sound which conveys it. Pleasing ideas can hardly be transmitted to the mind by means of harsh and disagreeable sounds. At these the mind immediately revolts. Nothing can enter into the affections which stumbles at the threshold by offending the ear. Music has naturally a great power over all men to prompt and facilitate certain emotions: inasmuch that there are scarce-

ly any dispositions which we wish to raise in others, but certain sounds may be found concordant to those dispositions, and tending to excite and promote them. Language is to a certain degree possessed of the same power. Not content with simply interpreting our ideas to the hearer, it can communicate them enforced by corresponding sounds; and to the pleasure of imparted knowledge, can add the new and separate pleasure of melody.

In the harmony of sentences, two things may be considered; agreeable sound, or modulation, in general, without any particular expression, and sound so ordered as to become expressive of the sense.

Let us first consider sound, in general, as the property of a well-constructed sentence. The musical cadence of a sentence will depend upon two circumstances; the choice of words, and the arrangement of them.

With regard to the choice of words, little can be said, unless we were to descend into a tedious and frivolous detail concerning the powers of the several letters, or simple sounds, of which speech is composed. It is evident that those words are most agreeable to the ear which are composed of smooth and liquid sounds, where there is a proper intermixture of vowels and consonants, without too many harsh consonants clashing with each other, or too many open vowels in succession, to cause a hiatus or disagreeable aperture of the mouth. It may always be assumed as a principle, that whatever words are difficult in pronunciation, are, in the same proportion, harsh and painful to the ear. Vowels add softness, consonants strength, to the sound of words. The melody of language requires a due proportion of both, and will be

destroyed by an excess of either. Long words are commonly more agreeable to the ear than monosyllables. They please it by the succession of sounds which they present: and accordingly the most musical languages possess them in the greatest abundance. Among words of any length, those are the most musical which do not wholly consist either of long or short syllables, but contain a due intermixture of both.

The harmony which results from a proper arrangement of the words and members of a period, is a more complex subject. However well chosen and well-sounding the words themselves may be, yet if they be ill-disposed, the music of the sentence is utterly lost. In the harmonious arrangement of his periods, no writer, ancient or modern, can be brought into competition with Cicero. He has studied this with the utmost care; and was fond, perhaps to excess, of what he calls the "*plena ac numerosa oratio*." We need only open his writings, to find instances that will render the effect of musical cadence sensible to every ear. And in our own language, the following passage may be quoted as an instance of harmonious construction.

We shall conduct you to a hill side, laborious, indeed, at the first ascent; but else so smooth, so green, so full of goodly prospects, and melodious sounds on every side, that the harp of Orpheus was not more charming.—*Milton's Tractate of Education*.

Every thing in this sentence conspires to promote the harmony. The words are happily chosen, being full of soft and liquid sounds; *laborious, smooth, green, goodly, melodious, charming*: and these words are so skilfully arranged, that, were we to alter the collocation of any one of them, the melody would sustain a sensible injury. The members of the period swell beautifully above each other, till the ear, prepared by

this gradual rise, is conducted to that full close on which it always rests with pleasure.

The structure of sentences, then, being susceptible of very considerable melody, our next inquiry should be, how this melodious structure is formed, what are its principles, and by what law it is regulated. This subject has been treated with great copiousness by the ancient critics.* But the languages of Greece and Rome were more susceptible than ours, of the graces and powers of melody. The quantities of their syllables were more fixed and determinate; their words were longer, and more sonorous; their method of varying the terminations of nouns at -bs, both introduced a greater variety of liquid sounds, and freed them from the multiplicity of ^o auxiliary words which we are under the necessity of employing; and, what is of the greatest importance, the inversions which their languages allowed, gave them the power of placing their words in whatever order was most suited to a musical arrangement. In consequence of the structure of their languages, and of their manner of pronouncing them, the musical cadence of sentences produced a greater effect in public-speaking among them, than it could possibly do in any modern oration. It is further to be observed, that for every species of music they had a finer relish than prevails among us; it was more generally studied, and applied to a greater variety of objects. Our northern ears are too coarse and obtuse. And by our simple and plain method of pronunciation, speech is accompanied

* The reader may consult Dionysius *De Structura Orationis*, Demetrius *De Elocutione*, Cicero *De Oratore*, and Quintilian *De Institutione Oratoria*.

with less melody than it was among the Greeks and Romans.

For these reasons, it would be fruitless to bestow the same attention upon the harmonious structure of our sentences, as was bestowed by those ancient nations. The doctrine of the Greek and Roman critics, on this head, has induced some to imagine, that our prose writings may be regulated by spondees, and trochees, iambuses and pæons, and other metrical feet.* But, to refute this notion, nothing further is necessary than its being applied to practice.

Although this musical arrangement cannot be reduced to a system, yet it demands a very considerable share of attention. It is chiefly owing to the neglect

* Some writers have supposed that the English language would admit of the measures of Greek and Latin poetry. "It is impossible," says Mr. C. "that the same measure, composed of the same times, should have a good effect upon the ear in one language, and a bad effect in another. The truth is, we have been accustomed from our infancy to the numbers of English poetry, and the very sound and signification of the words disposes the ear to receive them in a certain manner; so that its disappointment must be attended with a disagreeable sensation. In imbibing the first rudiments of education, we acquire, as it were, another ear for the numbers of Greek and Latin poetry, and this, being reserved entirely for the sounds and significations of the words that constitute those dead languages, will not easily accommodate itself to the sounds of our vernacular tongue, though conveyed in the same time and measure. In a word, Latin and Greek have annexed to them the ideas of the ancient measure from which they are not easily disjoined. But we will venture to say, this difficulty might be surmounted by an effort of attention, and a little practice; and in that case we should, in time, be as well pleased with the English as with Latin hexameters.—*Essays*, vol. ii. Essay xix.

of it, that British eloquence still remains in a state of infancy. The growth of eloquence, indeed, even in those countries where she flourished most, has ever been very slow. Athens had been in possession of all other polite improvements long before her pretensions to the persuasive arts were in any degree considerable; and the earliest orator of note among the Romans did not appear sooner than about a century before Cicero.

That great master of persuasion, taking notice of this remarkable circumstance, assigns it as an evidence of the superior difficulty of his favourite art.—There may be some truth in the observation: but whatever the cause may have been, the fact is undeniable. Accordingly, eloquence has by no means made equal advances in our own country, with her sister arts: and though we have seen many excellent poets, and a few good painters, arise among us, yet our nation can boast of very few accomplished orators. This circumstance will appear more surprising, when it is considered that we have a profession set apart for the purposes of persuasion; a profession which is conversant in the most animating topics of rhetoric.

Among the principal defects of our British orators, their general disregard of harmony has been least observed. It would be injustice, indeed, to deny that we have some oratorical performances tolerably musical; but it must be acknowledged that, for the most part, this is more the effect of accident than design, and rather to be attributed to the power of our language, than to the skill of our orators.

Archbishop Tillotson, who is frequently mentioned as having carried this species of eloquence to its highest perfection, seems to have no kind of rhetorical

numbers: and no man had ever less pretension to genuine oratory, than this celebrated preacher. If any thing could raise a flame of eloquence in the breast of an orator, there is no occasion on which it would be more likely to break out, than in celebrating departed merit: yet the two sermons which he preached upon the death of Dr. Gooch and of Dr. Whitcot, are as cold and languid performances as were ever produced on such an animating subject. It is indeed to be regretted, that he who abounds with such noble and generous sentiments, should want the art of displaying them to their full advantage; that the sublime in morals should not be attended with a suitable elevation of language. His words are commonly ill-chosen, and always ill-placed; his periods are both tedious and inharmonious; as his metaphors are generally mean, and sometimes ridiculous. It were easy to produce numberless instances of the truth of this assertion.— Thus in his sermon preached before the Princess of Denmark, he talks of *squeezing* a parable, *sharking*, *shifts*, *thrusting* religion *by*, *driving* a strict bargain with God; and speaking of the day of judgment, describes the world as *cracking about our ears*. In justice to the oratorical character of this most valuable prelate, it must, however, be acknowledged, that there is a noble simplicity in some few of his sermons.— His Discourse on Sincerity deserves to be mentioned with peculiar applause.

But to show his deficiency in the quality of which I am now treating, the following quotation will be sufficient.

One might be apt to think at first view, that this parable was *overdone*, and wanted something of a due decorum; it being hardly credible, that a man, after he had been so mercifully

dealt *withal*, as, upon his humble request, to have so *huge* a debt so freely forgiven, should, whilst the memory of so much mercy was fresh *upon him*, even in the very next moment, *handle* his fellow-servant, who had made the same humble request to him which he had done to his lord, with so much roughness and cruelty, for so inconsiderable a sum.—*Tillotson's Sermons*.

Not to mention other objections which might be raised against this period, it is harsh and unmusical throughout. The concluding members, which ought to have been full and flowing, are most miserably loose and disjointed. If the delicacy of Cicero's ear was so exquisitely refined, as not always to be satisfied even with the numbers of Demosthenes, how would it have been offended by the harshness and dissonance of so unharmonious a sentence?"*

Nothing tends to throw our eloquence at a greater distance from that of the ancients, than this Gothic arrangement: as those wonderful effects which sometimes attended their elocution were, in all probability, chiefly owing to their skill in musical concords. It was by the charm of numbers, united with the strength of reason, that Cicero confounded the audacious Cataline, and silenced the eloquent Hortensius. It was this that deprived Curio of all power of recollection, when he rose up to oppose that great master of rhetoric; it was this that made even Cæsar himself tremble; nay, what is yet more extraordinary, made Cæsar alter his determined purpose, and acquit the man whom he had resolved to condemn.

It will not be suspected that too much is here attributed to the power of numerous composition, when

* See Mr. Mitford's *Essay on the Harmony of Language*, p. 201.

we recollect an instance which Cicero produces of its wonderful effect. He informs us that he was himself a witness of its influence as Carbo was once haranguing the people. It was astonishing, says he, to observe the general applause which burst from the assembly when that orator pronounced the following sentence: "Patris dictum sapiens temeritas filii comprobavit." These words, perhaps, will not greatly affect a modern ear; and indeed it is probable that we are ignorant of the art of pronouncing the period with its genuine emphasis and cadence. We are certain, however, that the music of it consisted in the *dichorce* with which it is terminated; for Cicero himself assures us, that if the final measure had been changed, and the words placed in a different order, their effect would have been entirely destroyed.

The art of numerous arrangement was introduced among the Greeks by Thrasyarchus, though some of the admirers of Isocrates attributed the invention to the latter. It does not appear to have been studied by the Romans until about the age of Cicero; and even then it was by no means universally received. The ancient mode of composition had still many admirers, who were such enthusiasts with regard to antiquity, that they adopted her very defects. A disposition of the same kind may perhaps prevent its being much cultivated in Britain; and while Tillotson shall maintain his authority as an orator, it is not to be expected that any great advances will be made in this species of eloquence. That strength of understanding, and solidity of reason, which forms so conspicuous a part of the national character, may also serve to increase the difficulty of reconciling us to a study of this kind; as at first glance it may seem to lead an orator from

his grand and principal aim, and tempt him to make a sacrifice of sense to sound. It must be acknowledged, indeed, that in the times which succeeded the dissolution of the Roman republic, this art was so perverted from its true end, as to become the sole study of their enervated orators. Pliny the younger often complains of this contemptible affectation; and the polite author of that elegant dialogue which, with very little probability, is attributed either to Tacitus or Quintilian, assures us it was the ridiculous boast of certain orators in the time of the declension of genuine eloquence, that their harangues were capable of being set to music, and sung upon the stage. But it must be remembered that the true art now recommended, is designed to aid, not to supersede reason: it is so far from being necessarily effeminate, that it adds not only grace but strength to the powers of persuasion. Cicero and Quintilian have laid it down as an invariable rule, that numerous composition must never appear the effect of labour in the orator; that the tuneful flow of his periods must always seem the result of their casual disposition; and that it is the highest offence against the art, to weaken the expression for the sake of giving a more musical tone to the cadence.

There are two circumstances on which the music of a sentence chiefly depends; the proper distribution of its several members, and the close or cadence of the whole.

Whatever is easy and agreeable in the pronunciation has always a grateful sound to the ear: and that which is difficult in the pronunciation, can never be possessed of melody. The facility with which any sentence is recited, must, in a great measure, depend

upon the proper disposition of the pauses. They ought to be so distributed, as to render the course of the breathing easy, and at the same time should fall at such distances, as to bear a certain musical proportion to each other. This rule will be best illustrated by examples.

This discourse concerning the easiness of God's commands does, all along, suppose and acknowledge the difficulties of the first entrance upon a religious course; except, only in those persons who have had the happiness to be trained up to religion by the easy and insensible degrees of a pious and virtuous education.—*Tillotson's Sermons.*

This sentence is in some degree harsh and unpleasant; it contains no more than one considerable pause, which falls between the two members; and each of those members is so long, as to occasion a difficulty in breathing while it is pronounced. The following are instances of a different kind.

By soothing those inequalities, which the necessary difference of ranks and conditions has introduced into society, she not only reconciles us to the highest eminences of life, but leads us to consider them as affording to the social world, that sublime contrast which the landscape derives from the diversity of hill and dale, and as sending down those streams of benignity which refresh and gladden the lower stations.—*Brown's Sermons.*

When thine aching eyes shall look forward to the end that is far distant; and when behind thou shalt find no retreat; when thy steps shall falter, and thou shalt tremble at the depth beneath, which thought itself is not able to fathom; then shall the angel of retribution lift his inexorable hand against thee; from the irremeable way shall thy feet be smitten; thou shalt plunge into the burning flood, and though thou shalt live for ever, thou shalt rise no more.—*Hawkesworth's Almorán and Hamet.*

Porticoes, which had withstood the assaults of time more than two thousand years; broken columns of different lengths rising at a considerable distance within the limits of the same pile;

sculptured portals, through whose frowning arches the winds passed with a hollow murmuring; numberless figures engraven on the pilasters of those portals; and multitudes of hieroglyphics on the different parts of the spacious ruin; gave the travellers a mournful and magnificent idea of the pristine grandeur of this edifice.—*Langhorne's Solymán and Alméná.*

Here every thing is flowing and easy. The members of the sentences bear a just proportion to each other; and the reader, therefore, never experiences any difficulty of breathing.

The next subject which claims our attention is, the close or cadence of the whole sentence, which, as it is always the part most sensible to the ear, demands the greatest care. Upon it the mind pauses and rests; it ought, therefore, to contain nothing harsh or abrupt. When we aim at dignity or elevation, the sound should be made to swell gradually to the end; the longest members of the period, and the fullest and most sonorous words, should be reserved for the conclusion. The following sentence is constructed in this manner.

It fills the mind with the largest variety of ideas; converses with its objects at the greatest distance; and continues the longest in action, without being tired or satiated with its proper enjoyments.—*Addison, Spectator.*

Here every reader must be sensible of a beauty, both in the division of the members and pauses, and the manner in which the sentence is rounded, and conducted to a full and harmonious close. "Mr. Addison's periods, and members of periods," says Mr. Mitford, "mostly end with the unaccented hyper-rhythmical syllable, and scarcely ever with a strong accent, except where emphasis gives importance to such a conclusion. The graceful flow so much admired in his writings, is not a little owing to this circumstance.

His language seems all united like water, by the aptitude of its parts to coalesce, and never wears the appearance of being forcibly held together.”*

A falling off towards the end, always produces a disagreeable effect. For this reason, pronouns and prepositions are as unpleasant to the ear, as they are inconsistent with strength of expression. The sense and the sound seem to have a mutual influence on each other; that which offends the ear, is apt to mar the strength of the meaning; and that which really degrades the sense appears also to have a bad sound. It may be affirmed in general, that a musical close, in our language, requires either the last, or the last but one, to be a long syllable. Words which consist mostly of short syllables, as *contrary*, *retrospect*, *particular*, seldom conclude a sentence harmoniously, unless a succession of long syllables has rendered them agreeable on account of the variety which they introduce.

It is necessary, however, to observe, that sentences so constructed as to make the sound always swell towards the end, and to rest upon syllables of a certain description, give a discourse the tone of declamation. The ear soon becomes acquainted with the melody, and is apt to be cloyed with monotony. If we would keep alive the attention of the reader or hearer, if we would preserve vivacity and strength in our composition, we must be solicitous to vary our measures. This observation regards the distribution of the members, as well as the cadence of the period. Sentences constructed in a similar manner, with the pauses falling at equal intervals, should never follow

* Mitford's Essay on the Harmony of Language, p. 203.

each other. Short and long sentences ought to be properly intermixed, in order to render discourse sprightly, as well as magnificent. Monotony is the great error into which those writers are apt to fall, who study harmonious arrangement. A very vulgar ear will enable an author to catch some kind of melody, and to form all his sentences according to it; but this oft-recurring modulation will soon produce satiety and disgust. A just and correct ear is requisite for diversifying the melody; and hence we do seldom meet with authors remarkably happy in this respect.

Though the music of sentences demands a very considerable degree of attention, yet this attention must be confined within moderate bounds. Every appearance of affectation of harmony is disagreeable; especially if the love of it betray us so far as to sacrifice perspicuity, precision, or strength of sentiment, to sound. All unmeaning words, introduced merely to round the period, or complete the melody, are great blemishes in writing. They are childish ornaments, by which a sentence always loses more in point of significancy, than it can gain in point of sound. After all the labour bestowed by Quintilian on regulating the measures of prose, he comes at last, with his usual good sense, to this conclusion: "Upon the whole, I would rather chuse, that composition should appear rough and harsh, if that be necessary, than that it should be enervated and effeminate, such as we find in the style of too many. Some sentences, therefore, which we have studiously formed into melody, should be thrown loose, that they may not seem too much laboured: nor ought we ever to omit

any proper or expressive word, for the sake of smoothing a period.”*

Hitherto our attention has been directed to agreeable sound or modulation in general. It yet remains to treat of a higher beauty; the sound adapted to the sense. This beauty may either be attained in prose or verse: but in illustrating its general principle, the writings of the poets will furnish us with the most copious and striking illustrations.

The resemblance of poetical numbers to the subject which they mention or describe, may be considered as general or particular, as consisting in the flow and structure of a whole passage taken together, or as comprised in the sound of some emphatical and descriptive words, or in the cadence and harmony of single verses.

A general analogy between the sound and the sense is to be found in every language which admits of poetry; in every author whose fancy enables him to impress images strongly on his own mind, and whose choice and variety of language readily supply him with just representations.† To such a writer it is natural to change his measure with the subject, even without any effort of the understanding, or intervention of the judgment. To revolve jollity and mirth, necessarily tunes the voice of a poet to gay and sprightly notes, as it fires his eye with vivacity; and reflections on gloomy situations and disastrous events, will sadden his numbers as it will cloud his countenance. But in such passages, there is only the similitude of pleasure to pleasure, and of grief to grief,

* Quintilian, De Institut. Orator. lib. ix. cap. iv.

† See Dr. Beattie's Essay on Poetry and Music, p. 282.

without any immediate application of particular images. The same flow of joyous versification will celebrate the jollity of marriage, and the exultation of triumph; and the same languor of melody will suit the complaint of an absent lover, and the lamentations of a conquered king.

It is scarcely to be doubted that on many occasions we produce the music which we imagine ourselves to hear; that we modulate the poem by our own disposition, and ascribe to the numbers the effects of the sense. We may observe in real life, that it is not easy to deliver a pleasing message in an unpleasing manner, and that we readily associate beauty and deformity with those whom we have reason to love or hate. Yet it would be too daring to declare that all the celebrated adaptations of harmony are chimerical; that Homer, Virgil, and Milton, paid no extraordinary attention to their numbers in any of those passages where the sound is said to be an echo to the sense.*

There being frequently a strong resemblance of one sound to another, it will not be surprising to find an articulate sound resembling one that is not articulate. Of this resemblance we meet with an exemplification in the following passages:

On a sudden open fly,
With impetuous recoil and jarring sound,
Th' infernal doors, and on their hinges grate
Harsh thunder. [Milton.
The impetuous arrow *whizzes* on the wing.—Pope.

The string, let fly,
Twang'd short and sharp, like the shrill swallow's cry.—*Id.*
Loud sounds the air, redoubling strokes on strokes,

* Johnson's Rambler, No. 94.

On all sides round the forest hurls her oaks
Headlong. Deep echoing groan the thickets brown,
Then *rustling, crackling, crashing*, thunder down.—*Id.*

The pilgrim oft .

At dead of night 'mid his oraison hears
Aghast the voice of Time, disparting towers,
Tumbling all precipitate down-dash'd,

Rattling around, loud thundering to the moon.—*J. Dyer.*

That there is any other natural resemblance of sound to signification, must not be taken for granted. There is evidently no similarity between sound and motion, or between sound and sentiment. We are apt to be deceived by an artful pronunciation. The same passage may be pronounced in many different tones, elevated or humble, sweet or harsh, brisk or melancholy, so as to accord with the sentiment or thought. This concordance must be carefully distinguished from that between sound and sense; which may sometimes subsist without any dependence upon artful pronunciation. The latter is the work of the poet; the former must be attributed to the reader.

There is another circumstance which contributes still more to the deceit. Sound and sense being intimately connected, the properties of the one are readily communicated to the other. Thus, for example, the quality of grandeur, of sweetness, or of melancholy, though solely belonging to the thought, is transferred to the word by which that quality is expressed. In this manner, words bear an imaginary resemblance to those objects of which they are only the arbitrary signs.

It is of the greatest importance to distinguish the natural resemblance of sound and signification from those artificial resemblances which have now been described.

From the instances lately adduced, it is evident that there may be a similarity between sounds articulate, and sounds inarticulate. But we may safely pronounce that this resemblance can be carried no farther. The objects of the different senses have no similarity to each other. Sound, whether articulate or inarticulate, bears no kind of analogy to taste or smell; and as little can it resemble internal sentiment, feeling, or emotion. Must we then admit that nothing but sound can be imitated by sound? Taking imitation in its proper sense, as importing a coincidence between different objects; the proposition must be admitted; and yet in many passages that are not descriptive of sound, every one must be sensible of a peculiar concord between the sound of the words and their meaning. As there can be no doubt of the fact, what remains is, to inquire into its cause.

Resembling causes may produce effects which have no resemblance; and causes which have no resemblance may produce resembling effects. A magnificent building, for example, does not in any degree resemble an heroic action; and yet the emotions which they produce, are sometimes concordant, and bear a resemblance to each other. We are still more sensible of this kind of resemblance in a song where the music is properly adapted to the sentiment. There is no similarity between thought and sound; but there is the strongest similarity between the emotion excited by music tender and pathetic, and that excited by the complaint of an unsuccessful lover. When we apply this observation to the present subject, it will appear that in some instances, the sound even of a single word makes an impression similar to that which is produced by the thing it signifies. *Running, rapidity,*

impetuosity, precipitation, are of this description. Brutal manners produce in the spectator an emotion not unlike what is caused by a harsh and rough sound; and hence the beauty of the figurative expression, *rugged manners*. The word *little*, being pronounced with a very small aperture of the mouth, has a weak and faint sound, which makes an impression resembling that produced by a diminutive object. This resemblance of effects is still more remarkable where a number of words are connected together in a period. Words pronounced in succession, often produce a strong impression; and when this impression happens to accord with that made by the sense, we are sensible of a complex emotion, peculiarly pleasant; one proceeding from the sentiment, and one from the melody or sound of the words. But the chief pleasure arises from having these two concordant emotions combined in perfect harmony, and carried on in the mind to a full close.

Except those passages in which sound is described, all the examples given by critics of sense being imitated by sound, resolve themselves into a resemblance of effects. Emotions excited by sound and signification may have a mutual resemblance: but sound itself cannot have a resemblance to any thing but sound.

After having suggested these general observations, it will be proper to descend to particular cases.

By a number of syllables in succession, an emotion is sometimes raised, similar to that excited by successive motion. In this manner slow motion may be justly imitated in a verse where long syllables prevail, especially with the aid of a slow pronunciation.

Illi inter sese magna vi brachia tollunt.—*Virgil*.

On the other hand, swift motion is imitated by a succession of short syllables.

Quadrupedante putrem sonitu quatit ungula campum.—*Ibid.*

By the frequency of its pauses, a line composed of monosyllables makes an impression similar to what is made by laborious interrupted motion.

First march the heavy mules securely slow;
O'er hills, o'er dales, o'er crags, o'er rocks they go.—*Pope.*

With many a weary step, and many a groan,
Up the high hill he heaves a huge round stone.—*Broome.*

The impression made by rough sounds in succession, resembles that made by rough or tumultuous motion: and, on the other hand, the impression of smooth sounds resembles that of gentle motion.

Two craggy rocks, projecting to the main,
The roaring wind's tempestuous rage restrain;
Within, the waves in softer murmurs glide,
And ships secure without their hausers ride.—*Pope.*

Prolonged motion is well expressed by an Alexandrine verse. The following is an example of *slow* motion prolonged.

A needless Alexandrine ends the song,
That, like a wounded snake, drags its slow length along.—*Id.*

The next example is of *forcible* motion prolonged.

The waves behind impel the waves before,
Wide-rolling, foaming high, and tumbling on the shore.—*Id.*

The last is of *rapid* motion prolonged.

The huge round stone, resulting with a bound,
Thunders impetuous down, and smokes along the ground.
Broome.

A period consisting mostly of long syllables, that is, of syllables pronounced slow, produces an emotion which bears a faint resemblance to that excited by

gravity and solemnity. Hence the beauty of the following verse.

Olfi sedato respondit corde Latinus.—Virgil,

A short syllable made long, or a long syllable made short, raises, by the difficulty of pronouncing contrary to custom, a feeling similar to that of hard labour.

When Ajax strives some rock's vast weight to throw.—*Pope.*

This enumeration might be extended to a much greater length; but the examples which have been given, may serve as a foundation for the reader's further inquiries.

I have had occasion to observe, that to complete the resemblance between sound and sense, artful pronunciation contributes in no small degree. Pronunciation may therefore be considered as a branch of the present subject; and with some observations upon it this chapter shall be concluded.

To give a just idea of pronunciation, it must be distinguished from singing. The latter is carried on by notes, requiring each of them a different aperture of the windpipe: the notes properly belonging to the former, are expressed by different apertures of the mouth, without varying the aperture of the windpipe.

In reading, as in singing, there is a key-note. Above this note the voice is frequently elevated, to make the sound correspond to the elevation of the subject. But the mind, in an elevated state, is disposed to action; and therefore in order to rest, it must be brought down to the key-note. Hence the term *cadence*.

The only rule that can be given for directing the pronunciation, is to sound the words in such a manner as to imitate the things which they signify. In pronouncing words denoting something elevated, the

voice ought to be raised above its ordinary tone. To imitate a stern and impetuous passion the words ought to be pronounced rough and loud. A sweet and gentle passion, on the contrary, ought to be imitated by a soft and melodious tone of voice. In general, words of the greatest importance ought to be marked with peculiaremphasis. Another circumstance which contributes to the resemblance between sense and sound, is the slowness or the rapidity of pronunciation. A period should be pronounced slow, when it expresses what is solemn or deliberate: and quick, when it expresses what is lively or impetuous.

This rule might be branched out into many particular observations: but these do not properly belong to the present undertaking, because no language furnishes words to denote the different degrees of high and low, loud and soft, fast and slow. Before these circumstances can be made the subject of regular instruction, notes must be invented resembling those employed in music. We have reason to believe that in Greece every tragedy was accompanied with such notes, to ascertain the pronunciation: but hitherto the moderns have not thought of this refinement. Cicero, indeed, without the help of notes, professes to give rules for ascertaining the various tones of voice which are proper in expressing the different passions; and it must be acknowledged that in this attempt he has exhausted the whole power of language. At the same time, it is evident that these rules avail little in point of instruction. The very words which he employs, are not intelligible, except to those who are previously acquainted with the subject.

CHAPTER XII.

Of Figurative Language in general.

FIGURES of speech always denote some departure from the simplicity of expression; they enunciate after a particular manner, the idea which we intend to convey, and that with the addition of some circumstance designed to render the impression more strong and vivid. When I say, "A good man enjoys comfort in the midst of adversity," I express my thoughts in the simplest manner possible. But when I say, "To the upright there ariseth light in darkness," the same sentiment is expressed in a figurative style; a new circumstance is introduced; light is put in the place of comfort, and darkness is used to suggest the idea of adversity.

Though figures imply a deviation from what may be reckoned the most simple form of speech, we are not thence to infer that they imply any thing uncommon, or unnatural. This is so far from being the case, that, on many occasions, they are both the most natural, and the most common method of uttering our sentiments. It is impossible to compose any discourse without making frequent use of them; nay, there are few sentences of any length, in which there does not occur some expression that may be termed figurative. Figures are therefore to be accounted part of that language which nature dictates to mankind. They are not the invention of the schools, nor the mere product of study: on the contrary, the most illiterate speak in figures, as often perhaps as the most learned. When-

ever the imagination of the vulgar is powerfully awakened, or their passions highly inflamed, they will pour forth a torrent of figurative language, as forcibly, as could be employed by the most artificial declaimer.

"When we attend," says Dr. Ferguson, "to the language which savages employ on any solemn occasion, it appears that man is a poet by nature. Whether at first obliged by the mere defects of his tongue, and the scantiness of proper expressions, or seduced by a pleasure of the fancy in stating the analogy of its object, he clothes every conception in image and metaphor. 'We have planted the tree of peace,' says an American orator; 'we have buried the axe under its roots: we will henceforth repose under its shade; we will join to brighten the chain that binds our nations together.' Such are the collections of metaphor which those nations employ in their public harangues. They have likewise adopted those lively figures, and that daring freedom of language, which the learned have afterwards found so well fitted to express the rapid transitions of the imagination, and the ardours of a passionate mind."*

Dr. Beattie has remarked that "savages, illiterate persons, and children, have but comparatively few words in proportion to the things they may have occasion to speak of; and must therefore recur to tropes and figures more frequently than persons of copious elocution. A seaman, or mechanic, even when he talks of that which does not belong to his art, borrows his language from that which does; and this makes his diction figurative to a degree that is sometimes entertaining enough."†

* Ferguson's History of Civil Society, part iii. sect. viii.

What then is it that has drawn the attention of critics and rhetoricians so much to these forms of speech? They remarked that in them consists much of the beauty and force of language, and found them always to bear some character or distinguishing marks, by the help of which they could reduce them under separate classes. To this, perhaps, they owe their name. As the figure or shape of one body distinguishes it from another, so each of these forms of speech has a cast peculiar to itself, which both distinguishes it from the rest, and from the simple form of expression. Simple expression just makes our idea known to others; but figurative language bestows a particular dress upon that idea; a dress which serves to distinguish and adorn it.

Figures in general may be described to be that language which is prompted either by the imagination, or by the passions. Rhetoricians commonly divide them into two great classes, figures of words, and figures of thought. The former are denominated tropes: they consist in the employment of a word to signify something that is different from its original and primitive meaning; so that if you alter the word, you destroy the figure. Thus in the instance lately adduced, the trope consists in "light and darkness" being not meant in a literal sense, but substituted for "comfort and adversity," on account of some resemblance, or analogy which they are supposed to bear to those conditions of life. The other class, termed figures of thought, supposes the words to be used in their proper and literal meaning, and the figure to consist in the turn of the thought. This is the case

† Beattie's *Essay on Poetry and Music*, p. 236.

with personifications, and apostrophes; where, though you vary the words which are used, or translate them from one language into another, you may still preserve the same figure. This distinction, however, is of very small importance: nothing can be built upon it in practice; nor can it always be clearly observed. Provided we remember that figurative language imports some colouring of the imagination, or some emotion or passion, expressed in our style, it is a matter of very little moment, whether we give to some particular mode of expression the name of a trope or of a figure.

As it would be tedious to dwell on all the variety of figurative expressions which rhetoricians have enumerated, I shall only select such figures as most frequently occur. The principles and rules laid down concerning them will sufficiently direct us to the use of the rest, either in prose or poetry.*

CHAPTER XIII.

Of Personification.

THE boldest effort of the imagination seems to be that which bestows sensibility and voluntary motion upon things inanimate. At first view, one would be dis-

* Many curious observations respecting the nature of figurative language occur in the Marquis Beccaria's *Ricerche intorno alla Natura dello Stile*.

posed to conclude that this figure borders on the extravagant and ridiculous. For what can seem more remote from the track of reasonable thought, than to speak of stones, trees, fields, and rivers, as if they were living creatures, and to attribute to them thought and sensation, action and affection? This would appear to be nothing more than childish conceit, which no person of taste could relish. The case, however, is very different. No such ridiculous effect is produced by personification, when judiciously managed: on the contrary, it is found to be natural and agreeable. Nor is any very uncommon degree of passion required to make us relish it. Into every species of poetry it easily gains admission: it is by no means excluded from prose; and even in common conversation it not unfrequently finds a place. Thus we do not hesitate to speak of a *furious* dart, a *deceitful* disease, the *thirsty* ground, the *angry* ocean. The use of such expressions shows the facility with which the mind can accommodate the properties of living creatures to inanimate objects, or to its own abstract ideas.

That our actions are too much influenced by passion, is an acknowledged truth; but it is not less certain that passion also possesses considerable influence over our perceptions, opinions and belief. When by any animating passion, whether pleasant or painful, an impulse is given to the imagination, we are in that condition disposed to use every sort of figurative expression. Now those figures are generally founded upon a momentary belief in some circumstance, which calm and unclouded reason would represent in quite a different point of view. "A man agitated," says Dr. Beattie, "with any interesting passion, especially of long continuance, is apt to fancy that all nature

sympathises with him. If he has lost a beloved friend, he thinks the sun less bright than at other times; and in the sighing of the winds and groves, in the lowings of the herd, and in the murmurs of the stream, he seems to hear the voice of lamentation. But when joy or hope predominates, the whole world assumes a gay appearance. In the contemplation of every part of nature, of every condition of mankind, of every form of human society; the benevolent and pious man, the morose and the cheerful, the miser and the misanthrope, finds occasion to indulge his favourite passion, and sees, or thinks he sees, his own temper reflected back in the actions, sympathies, and tendencies of other things and persons. Our affections are, indeed, the medium through which we may be said to survey ourselves, and every thing else; and whatever be our inward frame, we are apt to perceive a wonderful congeniality in the world without us. And hence, the fancy, when roused by real emotions, or by the pathos of composition, is easily reconciled to those figures of speech that ascribe sympathy, perception, and other attributes of animal life, to things inanimate, or even to notions merely intellectual."*

In the following example of personification, Almeria calls upon the earth to protect her from the unkindness of her father.

O Earth, behold, I kneel upon thy bosom,
And bend my flowing eyes to stream upon
Thy face, imploring thee that thou wilt yield;
Open thy bowels of compassion, take
Into thy womb the last and most forlorn
Of all thy race. Hear me, thou common parent;

* Beattie's Essay on Poetry and Music, p. 255.

I have no parent else. Be thou a mother,
 And step between me and the curse of him,
 Who was—who was, but is no more a father;
 But brands my innocence with horrid crimes;
 And, for the tender names of child and daughter,
 Now calls me murderer and parricide.—*Congreve.*

Plaintive passions are extremely solicitous for vent;
 and a soliloquy frequently answers this purpose. But
 when such a passion becomes excessive, it cannot be
 gratified except by sympathy from others; and if de-
 nied that consolation, it will convert even things inani-
 mate into sympathising beings.

Ye Woods and Wilds, whose melancholy gloom
 Accords with my soul's sadness, and draws forth
 The tear of sorrow from my bursting heart,
 Farewell awhile. *Home.*

Ah, happy hills! ah, pleasing shade!
 Ah, fields beloved in vain,
 Where once my careless childhood stray'd,
 A stranger yet to pain!
 I feel the gales that from ye blow,
 A momentary bliss bestow;
 As waving fresh their gladsome wing,
 My weary soul they seem to sooth,
 And, redolent of joy and youth,
 To breath a second spring. *Gray.*

That such personification is derived from nature, will
 not admit of the least doubt, when we consider that it
 is to be found in the poetical productions of the dark-
 est ages, and most remote countries.

Terror is another source of this figure: it is com-
 municated in thought to every surrounding object,
 even to those which are inanimate.

Go, view the settling sea. The stormy wind is laid; but the
 billows still tumble on the deep, and seem to fear the blast.

Ossian.

We naturally communicate our joy in the same manner.

As when to them who sail
Beyond the Cape of Hope, and now are past
Mozambic, off at sea north-east winds blow
Sabean odour from the spicy shore
Of Araby the blest; with such delay
Well-pleased, they slack their course, and many a league,
Cheer'd with the grateful smell, old Ocean smiles.—*Milton.*

In all the above examples, the personification, if I mistake not, is so complete as to afford an actual, though momentary, conviction, that the objects introduced are possessed of life and intelligence. But it is evident, from numberless instances, that the personification is not always so perfect. It is often employed in descriptive poetry, without being intended to produce the same conviction.

O Winds of Winter! list ye there
To many a deep and dying groan?
Or start ye, demons of the midnight air,
At shrieks and thunders louder than your own?
Alas! ev'n your unhallow'd breath.
May spare the victim fallen low;
But man will ask no truce to death,
No bounds to human woe. *Campbell.*

Come gentle spring! ethereal mildness, come,
And from the bosom of yon dropping cloud,
While music wakes around, veil'd in a shower
Of shadowing roses, on our plains descend.—*Thomson.*

Now Summer with her wanton court is gone
To revel on the south side of the world,
And flaunt and frolic out the livelong day;
While Winter, rising pale from the northern seas,
Shakes from his hoary locks the drizzling rheum.—*Armstrong.*
Lo! how the years to come, a numerous and well-fitted
quire,

All hand in hand do decently advance,
And to my song with smooth and equal measures dance.

[*Cowley.*]

But look, the Morn, in russet mantle clad,
Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastward hill.—*Shakespeare.*

Awake, ye West winds, through the lonely dale,
And Fancy, to thy fairy bower betake!
Even now with balmy freshness breathes the gale,
Dimpling with downy wing the stilly lake;
Through the pale willows, faltering whispers wake,
And evening comes with locks bedropt with dew.—*Mickle.*

Night, sable goddess! from her ebon throne,
In rayless majesty, now stretches forth
Her leaden sceptre o'er a slumb'ring world.—*Young.*

In these instances, it may be presumed that the personification, either with the poet or his readers, does not amount to any conviction that the objects are endowed with intelligence. The winds, the seasons, years, morning, evening, and night, are not here understood to be sensible beings. The personification must, therefore, be referred to the imagination; the inanimate object is figured to be possessed of consciousness; but we are not even impressed with a momentary conviction that it is so in reality. Ideas or fictions of imagination, have the power of exciting emotions in the mind; and when any inanimate object is, in imagination, supposed to be an intelligent being, it assumes an appearance of greater importance than when an idea is formed of it according to truth. In this case, however, the elevation is far from being equal to what it is when the personification amounts to actual conviction. Thus personification is of two kinds. The first, or nobler kind, may be termed passionate personification; the other, or more humble, may be termed descriptive personification. Personi-

fication in mere description, is seldom or never carried the length of conviction.

This figure admits of three different degrees; which it is necessary to remark and distinguish, in order to determine the propriety of its use. The first, is when some of the properties or qualities of living creatures are ascribed to inanimate objects; the second, when those inanimate objects are introduced as acting like living creatures; and the third, when they are represented, either as speaking to us, or as listening when we address them.

When this figure is used in its lowest degree, it raises the style so little, that it may be admitted into the most humble discourse. Such expressions as *furious dart*, *thirsty ground*, raise so slight a conviction of sensibility, if they raise any at all, that it may seem doubtful whether they ought not to be referred to some other figure. Still, however, such epithets are found to have a more powerful effect than those which are properly and literally applicable to the objects. This effect may be explained in the following manner. In the expression *angry ocean*, do we not tacitly compare the ocean in a storm to a man in wrath? It is by this tacit comparison that the expression acquires a force or elevation above what is found in an epithet proper to the object. This comparison, though only tacit, seems to exclude personification: by the very nature of comparison, the objects compared are kept distinct, and the native appearance of each is preserved.

All that can be said concerning the subject is, that, with regard to such instances, it must depend upon the reader, whether they may be examples of personification, or merely of what is denominated a figure of speech. A sprightly imagination will advance them

to the former class; while, with a plain reader, they will remain in the latter.

The second degree of this figure is, when inanimate objects or abstract ideas are introduced acting like living creatures. Here we rise a step higher, and the personification becomes sensible. The strength of the figure depends upon the nature of the action which we attribute to those inanimate objects, and the particularity with which it is described.

Go to your Natural Religion; lay before her Mahomet, and his disciples, arrayed in armour and blood, riding in triumph over the spoils of thousands, who fell by his victorious sword. Shew her the cities which he set in flames, the countries which he ravaged and destroyed, and the miserable distress of all the inhabitants of the earth. When she has viewed him in this scene, carry her into his retirement; shew her the prophet's chamber; his concubines and his wives; and let her hear him allege revelation, and a divine commission, to justify his adultery and lust. When she is tired with this prospect, then shew her the blessed Jesus humble and meek, doing good to all the sons of men. Let her see him in his most retired privacies; let her follow him to the Mount, and hear his devotions and supplications to God. Carry her to his table, and view his poor fare, and hear his heavenly discourse. Let her attend him to the tribunal, and consider the patience with which he endured the scoffs and reproaches of his enemies. Lead her to his cross; let her view him in the agony of death, and hear his last prayer for his persecutors: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!* When Natural Religion has thus viewed both, ask her, Which is the prophet of God? But her answer we have already had, when she saw part of this scene, through the eyes of the centurion, who attended at the cross. By him she spoke, and said: *Truly this man was the Son of God.*—[*Sherlock's Sermons.* This is more than elegant; it is truly sublime. The whole passage is animated; and the figure rises at the conclusion, when Natural Religion, who before was

only a spectator, is introduced as speaking by the centurion's voice. This is an instance of personification, carried as far as prose, even in its highest elevation, will admit.

The mythological personification in Dr. Smollett's *Ode to Independence* is managed with admirable effect; and this is indeed one of the noblest lyric poems in the English language.

The genius of our tongue affords us a material advantage in the use of this figure. All substantive nouns, except the proper names of creatures, male or female, are destitute of gender. By simply bestowing the masculine or feminine gender upon inanimate objects, we introduce personification. "When," says Mr. Harris, "we give them sex, by making them masculine or feminine, they are thenceforth personified; are a kind of intelligent beings, and become, as such, the proper ornament either of rhetoric or poetry.

"Thus Milton:

The Thunder

Wing'd with red lightning and impetuous rage,
Perhaps hath spent *his* shafts. *P. Lost. I. 174.*

"The poet having just before called the hail and thunder, God's ministers of vengeance, and so personified them, had he afterwards said *its* shafts for *his* shafts, would have destroyed his own image, and approached withal so much nearer to prose.

"The following passage is from the same poem:

Should intermitted Vengeance arm again,
His red right hand. *P. L. II. 173.*

"In this place *his* hand is clearly preferable either to *hers* or *its*, by immediately referring us to God himself, the avenger.

"I only shall add one instance more:

At his command th' uprooted Hills retir'd
Each to *his* place: they heard his voice and went.
Obsequious: Heaven *his* wonted face renewed,
And with fresh flowrets Hill and Valley smil'd. *P. L. VI.*

"Here all things are personified; the hills *hear*, the valleys *smile*, and the *face* of heaven is renewed. Suppose then the poet had been necessitated by the laws of his language to have said—Each hill retir'd to *its* place—Heaven renewed *its* wonted face;—how prosaic and lifeless would these neuters have appeared; how detrimental to the *prosopopæia*, which he was aiming to establish! In all this therefore he was happy that the language in which he wrote imposed no such necessity; and he was too wise a writer to impose it on himself."*

Personifications of this kind are extremely frequent in poetry, of which indeed they may almost be considered as the life and soul. We expect to find every thing animated, in the descriptions of a poet who possesses a little fancy. Homer is remarkable for the use of this figure. War, peace, darts, spears, towns, rivers, every thing, in short, is alive in his writings. The same is the case with Milton and Shakspeare. One of the greatest pleasures we derive from poetry, is, to find ourselves always in the midst of our fellows, and to see every thing feeling and acting like ourselves. This is perhaps the principal charm of the figurative style, that it introduces us into society with all nature, and interests us even in inanimate objects, by forming a connexion between them and us, through that sensibility which it ascribes to them.

* Harris's *Hermes*, book i. chapter iv.

It yet remains to treat of the highest degree of this figure. This consists in introducing inanimate objects and irrational beings not only as feeling and acting, but also as listening and speaking. Personification in this degree, though on several occasions far from being unnatural, is very difficult in the management. It is the boldest of all rhetorical figures: it is the style of strong passion only; and therefore ought never to be attempted, unless when the mind is considerably heated and agitated. The introduction of some object inanimate, acting as if it had life, can be relished by the mind in the midst of cool description. But we must be in a state of considerable emotion, before we can so far realize the personification of an insensible object, as to conceive it listening to what we say, or returning an answer to our address. All strong passions, however, have a tendency to produce this figure: not only love, anger, and indignation, but even those which are seemingly more depressing, such as grief, remorse, and melancholy. In the subsequent passage, a poet of exquisite talents introduces an address from "the insect youth."

Methinks I hear in accents low
The sportive kind reply:
Poor moralist! and what art thou?
A solitary fly.
Thy joys no glittering female meets,
No hive hast thou of hoarded sweets,
No painted plumage to display:
On hasty wings thy youth is flown,
Thy sun is set, thy spring is gone—
We frolic while 'tis May. *Gray.*

Having thus treated of the nature of personification, and of its different degrees, it remains to show in what

cases it may be introduced with propriety, when it is suitable, when unsuitable.

After a passionate personification is properly introduced, it ought to be confined to its distinct province, that of gratifying some predominant passion. Every sentiment which is unconnected with this design, ought to be rejected. The passion of love, for example, in a plaintive tone, may bestow a momentary life upon woods and rocks, to make them witnesses of the lover's constancy or distress; but no passion will support a conviction so far stretched, as that those woods and rocks should report that constancy or distress to others. An eminent poet, however, has fallen into an error of this kind.

If extraordinary marks of respect to a person of low condition be ridiculous, not less so is the personification of a low subject. This rule chiefly regards descriptive personification; for a subject can hardly be regarded as mean or low that is the cause of a violent passion: in that circumstance, at least, it must be of importance. No positive rules, however, can be assigned with regard to what objects should be selected, and what avoided: the ultimate appeal must always lie to the decision of taste. A poet of superior genius, possessing the power of inflaming the mind, may take liberties which would be dangerous in others. Homer does not appear extravagant in animating his darts and arrows; nor Thompson in animating the seasons, the winds, the rains, the dews. The latter of these poets even ventures to animate the diamond; and this he does with great propriety. But there are objects familiar and base, to which personification cannot descend. In a composed state of mind, to animate a lump of matter even in the most rapid flight of fancy, degenerates into burlesque.

How now? what noise? that spirit's possessed with haste,
That wounds the unresisting postern with these strokes.

Shakespeare.

This produces a very ridiculous effect.

Descriptive personification cannot be too cautiously used. A personage in tragedy, agitated by some strong passion, is inspired with warm and lofty sentiments; and the reader catching fire by sympathy, relishes the boldest personifications: but a writer, even in the most lively description, ought to content himself with such figures of this kind as agree with the tone of mind inspired by the description. Nor is the lowest degree of personification to be admitted upon every occasion; for in plain narrative, the mind, serious and sedate, rejects the figure altogether.

Descriptive, still more than passionate personification, ought to be kept within the bounds of moderation. Upon certain occasions, a reader can even without passion imagine the winds to be animated: but still the winds are the subject; and any action ascribed to them contrary to their usual operation, appearing unnatural, seldom fails to banish the illusion altogether. The reader's imagination, too far strained, refuses its aid; and the description becomes obscure, instead of being more lively and luminous. In Mr. Campbell's exquisite *Ode to Winter*, the personification, though carried to a great extent, is managed with evident propriety and skill.

This figure requires to be used with greater moderation in prose than in poetry: for, in prose, the same assistances cannot be obtained for raising passion to its proper height by the force of numbers and the glow of style. Yet from this species of composition, addresses to objects inanimate are by no means ex-

cluded: they have their place in the loftier kind of oratory. A public speaker may on some occasions, very properly address religion or virtue, or his country, or some city or province, which has suffered, perhaps, great calamities, or been the scene of some memorable event. But it ought to be remembered, that, as such addresses are among the highest efforts of eloquence, they should never be attempted, unless by persons of more than ordinary genius. Of all frigid things, the most frigid are the awkward and unseasonable attempts sometimes made towards such kinds of personification, especially if they be long continued. We perceive the writer labouring to imitate the language of some passion which he neither feels himself, nor is capable of exciting in others.

"If," says the elegant and accomplished Mr. Roscoe, "the moderns excel the ancients in any department of poetry, it is in that now under consideration. It must not indeed be supposed that the ancients were insensible of the effects produced by this powerful charm. But it may safely be asserted, that they have availed themselves of this creative faculty, much more sparingly, and with much less success, than their modern competitors. The attribution of sense to inert objects, is indeed common to both; but the still bolder exertion which embodies abstract existence, and renders it susceptible of ocular representation, is almost exclusively the boast of the moderns."*

* Roscoe's *Life of Lorenzo de Medici*, vol. i. p. 357.

CHAPTER XIV.

Of Apostrophe.

APOSTROPHE is a figure nearly allied to personification. It consists in bestowing an ideal presence upon real persons, either dead or absent. We address them as if they stood before us listening to the overflowing of our passion.

Never, O little flock! from which I was torn by the cruel fate of war, never shall I be unmindful of the sacred ties that united us, of the uninterrupted harmony which we enjoyed, and of those fruits of the Spirit, goodness, righteousness, and truth, which exhibited among you the most convincing proofs of the energy of the gospel! Never shall I forget that melancholy day on which I was separated from you, without one public opportunity of "commending you to God, and to his grace," without one affectionate expression, without one adieu.—*Brown's Sermons.*

Strike the harp in praise of Bragela, whom I left in the isle of mist, the spouse of my love. Dost thou raise thy fair face from the rock to find the sails of Cuchullin? The sea is rolling far distant, and its white foam shall deceive thee for my sails. Retire, for it is night, my love, and the dark winds sigh in thy hair. Retire to the hall of my feasts, and think of the times that are past; for I will not return till the storm of war is gone.

[*Ossian.*

In these examples, an address is made to persons that are absent: but addresses are also made to the dead.

Farewell, too little, and too lately, known,
Whom I began to think and call my own;
For sure our souls were near ally'd, and thine
Cast in the same poetic mould with mine. *Dryden.*

Departed spirits of the mighty dead!
 Ye that at Marathon and Leuctra bled!
 Friends of the world! restore your swords to man,
 Fight in his sacred cause, and lead the van!
 Yet for Sarmatia's tears of blood atone,
 And make her arm puissant as your own!
 Oh! once again to Freedom's cause return
 The Patriot Tell, the Bruce of Bannockburn! *Campbell.*

Oh thou! with whom my heart was wont to share
 From reason's dawn each pleasure and each care;
 With whom, alas! I fondly hoped to know
 The humble walks of happiness below;
 If thy blest nature now unites above
 An angel's pity with a brother's love,
 Still o'er my life preserve thy mild controul,
 Correct my views, and elevate my soul. *Rogers.*

Art thou, my Gregory, for ever fled?
 And am I left to unavailing woe?
 When fortune's storms assail this weary head,
 Where cares long since have shed untimely snow,
 Ah, now for comfort whither shall I go?
 No more thy soothing voice my anguish cheers;
 Thy placid eyes with smiles no longer glow,
 My hopes to cherish and allay my fears. *Beattie.*

Phillips! whose touch harmonious could remove
 The pangs of guilty pow'r and hapless love,
 Rest here, distress by poverty no more;
 Find here that calm thou gav'st so oft before:
 Sleep undisturb'd within this peaceful shrine,
 Till angels wake thee with a note like thine. *Johnson.*

In all the precedent examples, the persons addressed are supposed to be either present, or at least to listen to the speakers.

It requires a less violent effort of imagination to suppose persons present who are absent or dead, than

to animate insensible beings, and direct our discourse to them. This figure may therefore be introduced where personification in its highest degree would be improper. It must not, however, be employed except when the mind is in some measure under the dominion of passion.

CHAPTER XV.

Of Hyperbole.

THE hyperbole consists in magnifying or diminishing an object beyond reality. This figure is in common use both among the learned and unlearned. The human mind does not rest satisfied with the simple truth, but has a strong propensity to add or diminish.* An object either very little or very great in its kind, strikes us with surprise; and this emotion forces upon the mind a momentary conviction that the object is greater or less than it is actually found to be. Hence the hyperbole, which expresses that momentary conviction. A writer taking advantage of this natural delusion, enriches his description by the use of hyperboles: and the reader, even in his coolest moments, relishes that figure; he is sensible that it is the operation of nature upon a warm fancy.

Even in common conversation; hyperbolical expressions very frequently occur; *as swift as the wind, as white as snow*, and the like; and our ordinary forms of compliment are almost all of them extravagant hyper-

* Quintilian, de Institut. Orator. lib. viii. chap. vi.

boles. Yet these exaggerated expressions scarcely strike us as hyperbolical. In an instant we make the proper abatement, and know how to form a just estimate. But when there is something striking and unusual in the form of a hyperbolical expression, it is exalted into a figure of speech, which draws our attention.

It cannot have escaped observation, that a writer is generally more successful in magnifying by hyperbole than in diminishing. A minute object contracts the mind, and fetters its powers; whereas a grand object dilates and inflames it.

The following quotations will exemplify the manner in which this figure is used:

For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth; so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.—*Genesis*.

Me miserable! which way shall I fly
Infinite wrath, and infinite despair?
Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell;
And in the lowest deep, a lower deep
Still threat'ning to devour me, opens wide,
To which the Hell I suffer seems a Heaven. *Milton*.

Swift Camilla scours the plain,
Flies o'er th' unbending corn and skims along the main.—*Pope*.

Longinus quotes from some comic poet, the following ludicrous instance of a diminishing hyperbole: "He was owner of a bit of ground not larger than a Lacedemonian letter."*

I. A hyperbole should never be introduced in the description of any thing ordinary or familiar. In such a case it is altogether unnatural.

* Longinus de Sublimitate, § xxxviii.

I saw him beat the surges under him,
 And ride upon their backs: he trode the water;
 Whose enmity he flung aside, and breasted
 The sirge most swoln that met him: his bold head
 'Bove the contentious waves he kept, and oar'd
 Himself with his good arms, in lusty strokes
 To th' shore, that e'er his wave-borne basis bow'd,
 As stooping to receive him. *Shakspeare.*

II. A hyperbole cannot be introduced with propriety, until the mind of the reader is duly prepared. A figure of this kind placed at the beginning of a work, is improper.

How far a hyperbole may be carried, and what is the proper measure and boundary of it, cannot be ascertained by any precise rule. Good sense and a cultivated taste must determine the point beyond which it will become extravagant. Longinus compares a hyperbole carried too far, to a bow-string which relaxes by overstraining, and produces an effect opposite to what is intended.

In single opposition, hand to hand,
 He did confound the best part of an hour
 In changing hardiment with great Glendower.
 Three times they breath'd, and three times did they drink,
 Upon agreement, of swift Severn's flood;
 Who then affrighted with their bloody looks,
 Ran fearfully among the trembling reeds,
 And hid his crisp head in the hollow bank,
 Blood-stained with these valiant combatants.—*Shakspeare.*

England ne'er had a king until his time:
 Virtue he had, deserving to command:
 His brandish'd sword did blind men with its beams:
 His arms spread wider than a dragon's wings:
 His sparkling eyes, replete with awful fire,
 More dazzled, and drove back his enemies,
 Than mid-day sun fierce bent against their faces.—*Ibid.*

I found her on the floor
In all the storm of grief, -yet beautiful;
Pouring forth tears at such a lavish rate,
That were the world on fire, they might have drown'd
The wrath of Heaven, and quench'd the mighty ruin.—*Lee*.

With regard to the latter of these instances, the person herself, who was under the distracting agitations of grief, might be permitted to hyperbolize in this manner; but the person describing her cannot be allowed an equal liberty. The one is supposed to utter the sentiments of passion; the other speaks only the language of description, which, according to the dictates of nature, is always in a lower tone. This is a distinction which, however obvious, has not been attended to by many writers.

III. A hyperbole, after it is introduced with every advantage, ought to be comprehended in as few words as possible. As it cannot be relished but in the confusion and swelling of the mind, a leisurely view dissolves the charm, and discovers it to be either extravagant or ridiculous.

CHAPTER XVI.

Of Comparison.

THE situation in which man is placed, requires some acquaintance with the nature, power, and qualities, of those objects which surround him. For acquiring a branch of knowledge so essential to our happiness and preservation, motives of interest and of reason are not alone sufficient: nature has providenti-

ally superadded curiosity, a vigorous principle which is never at rest. This principle strongly attaches us to those objects which have the recommendation of novelty: it incites us to compare things together, for the purpose of discovering their differences and resemblances.

Resemblance between objects of the same kind, and dissimilitude between those of different kinds, are too obvious and familiar to gratify our curiosity in any degree: its gratification lies in discovering differences where resemblance prevails, and resemblances where difference prevails. Thus a difference in individuals of the same kind of plants or animals, is deemed a discovery; while the many particulars in which they agree, are neglected; and in different kinds, any resemblance is eagerly remarked, without attending to the many particulars in which they differ.

Objects of different senses cannot often be properly compared together; for they are totally separated from each other, and have no circumstance in common to admit either resemblance or contrast. Objects of hearing may be compared together, as also those of taste, of smell, and of touch: but objects of sight are the principal source of comparison; because, in speaking or writing, things can only be compared in idea, and the ideas of sight are more distinct and lively than those of any other sense.

It must, however, be observed, that two objects are sometimes happily compared together, though, strictly speaking, they resemble each other in nothing.— Though they are dissimilar, they yet agree in the effects which they produce upon the mind: they raise a train of similar or concordant ideas; so that the re-

membrane of the one serves to strengthen the impression made by the other.

The music of Carryl was, like the memory of joys that are past, pleasant and mournful to the soul.—*Ossian*.

This seems happy and delicate: yet surely no kind of music bears any immediate resemblance to a feeling of the mind. Had it been compared to the voice of the nightingale, or the murmur of the stream, as it would have been by some ordinary poet, the likeness would have been more distinct; but, by founding his simile upon the effect which Carryl's music produced, the poet, while he conveys a very tender image, gives us, at the same time, a much stronger impression of the nature and strain of that music. The following similies are of the same description.

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that run down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments.—*Psalms*.

Delightful is thy presence, O Fingal! it is like the sun of Cromla, when the hunter mourns his absence for a season; and sees him between the clouds.—*Ossian*.

Often, like the evening sun, comes the memory of former times on my soul.—*Ibid*.

When a nation emerging from barbarity, begins to cultivate the fine arts, the beauties of language cannot long lie concealed: but when discovered, they are generally, by the force of novelty, carried beyond all bounds of moderation. Thus, in the first poetical efforts of every nation, we find metaphors and similes founded on the slightest and most distant resemblances. These, losing their grace with their novelty, wear gradually out of repute; and at length, on the improvement of taste, no metaphor or simile, except

it be of a striking kind, is admitted into any polite composition. It is scarcely possible to discover the resemblances upon which the following comparisons are founded.

Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast dove's eyes within thy locks: thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from mount Gilead. Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which come up from the washing; whereof every one bears twins, and none is barren among them. Thy lips are as a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely: thy temples are like a piece of pomegranate within thy locks. Thy neck is like the tower of David builded for an armoury, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men. Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins: thy neck is as a tower of ivory; thine eyes like the fish-pools in Heshbon by the gate of Beth-rabbim; thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon which looketh towards Damascus.—*Song of Solomon.*

Between an exemplification and a simile, a difference is to be remarked. A simile is founded upon the discovery of likeness between two actions, in their general nature dissimilar, or of causes terminating by different operations in some resemblance of effect. But the mention of another like consequence from a like cause, or of a like performance by a like agency, is not a simile, but an exemplification. It is not a simile to say, that the Thames waters fields, as the Po waters fields; or that as Hecla vomits flames in Iceland, so Ætna vomits flames in Sicily. When Horace says of Pindar, that he pours his violence and rapidity of verse, as a river swoln with rain rushes from the mountain; or of himself, that his genius wanders in quest of poetical decorations, as the bee wanders in quest of honey; he in either case produces a simile: the mind is impressed with the resemblance of things generally unlike, as unlike as intellect and body. But

if Pindar had been described as writing with the copiousness and grandeur of Homer, or Horace had told us, that he reviewed and finished his own poetry with the same care as Isocrates polished his orations, he would, instead of similitude, have exhibited almost identity; he would have given the same portraits with different names. When Addison represents the English as gaining a fortified pass, by repetition of attack and perseverance of resolution; their obstinacy of courage and vigour of onset, are well illustrated by the sea that breaks, with incessant battery, the dikes of Holland. This is a simile: but when the same author, after having celebrated the beauty of Marlborough's person, tells us that "Achilles thus was formed with every grace," he does not employ a simile but a mere exemplification. A simile may be compared to two lines converging at a point; and it is more excellent as the lines approach from greater distance: an exemplification may be considered as two parallel lines, which run on together without approximation; never far separated, and never joined.*

When comparisons are addressed to the understanding, their purpose is to instruct; when to the heart, to please. The latter of these purposes is accomplished by various means: first, by suggesting some unusual resemblance or contrast; secondly, by setting an object in the strongest light; thirdly, by associating an object with others that are agreeable; fourthly, by elevating an object; and fifthly, by depressing it. Of the two following comparisons, the former seems intended to instruct, the latter to please.

As wax would not be adequate to the purpose of signature, if it had not the power to retain as well as to receive the im-

* Johnson's *Life of Addison*.

pression, the same holds of the soul with respect to sense and imagination. Sense is its receptive power; imagination its retentive. Had it sense without imagination, it would not be as wax, but as water, where though all impressions be instantly made, yet as soon as they are made they are instantly lost.

[*Harris's Hermes.*]

Yet wand'ring, I found on my ruinous walk,
 By the dial-stone aged and green,
 One rose of the Wilderness left on its stalk,
 To mark where a garden had been.
 Like a brotherless hermit, the last of its race,
 All wild in the silence of nature it drew
 From each wandering sunbeam a lonely embrace;
 For the night-weed and thorn overshadow'd the place
 Where the flow'r of my forefathers grew. *Campbell.*

One of the means by which comparison affords us pleasure, is the suggestion of some unusual resemblance or contrast. It will be necessary to illustrate by particular instances.

Thus they their doubtful consultations dark
 Ended, rejoicing in their matchless chief;
 As when from the mountain-top dusky clouds
 Ascending, while the North-wind sleeps, o'erspread
 Heav'n's cheerful face, the low'ring element
 Scowls o'er the darken'd landscape, snow, and showers;
 If chance the radiant sun with farewell sweet
 Extends his ev'ning beam, the fields revive,
 The birds their notes renew, and bleating herds
 Attest their joy, that hill and valley rings. *Milton.*

Sweet are the uses of Adversity,
 Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
 Wears yet a precious jewel in her head. *Shakspeare.*

See how the Morning ope's her golden gates,
 And takes her farewell of the glorious Sun;
 How well resembles it the prime of youth,
 Trimm'd like a yonker prancing to his love! *Ibid.*

As the bright stars, and milky way,
 Shew'd by the night, are hid by day:
 So we in that accomplish'd mine,
 Help'd by the night, new graces find,
 Which, by the splendour of her view
 Dazzled before, we never knew.

Waller.

None of these similies, as they appear to me, tend to illustrate the principal subject: and therefore the chief pleasure they afford, must arise from suggesting resemblances that are not obvious.

The next effect of comparison, in the order mentioned, is to place an object in a conspicuous point of view.

Dr. Brown, in the subsequent passage, alludes to those who are under the influence of that false philanthropy which pursues unattainable beneficence, while it neglects the duty immediately incumbent, and the good that is at hand.

Persons of this character may be compared to those who ascend a lofty mountain, and, overlooking every adjacent object, stretch their labouring sight to the remotest compass of vision. Fired at last with the attempt to descry the distant fading specks on the horizon, they return to the plain, and retain no recollection, either of the scenes that were immediately under their feet, or of the remote points which they discovered with difficulty.—*Brown's Sermons.*

The goddess appears, for poverty ever comes at the call: but alas! he finds her by no means the charming figure books and his own imagination had painted. As when an eastern bride, whom her friends and relations had long described as a model of perfection, pays her first visit, the longing bridegroom lifts the veil to see a face he had never seen before; but, instead of a countenance blazing with beauty like the sun, he beholds deformity shooting icicles to his heart, such appears Poverty to her new entertainer.—*Goldsmith's Essays.*

There is a joy in grief when peace dwells with the sorrowful.
But they are wasted with mourning, O daughter of Toscar, and
their days are few. They fall away like the flower on which
the sun looks in its strength, after the mildew has passed over it,
and its head is heavy with the drops of night.—*Ossian*.

Why did not I pass away in secret, like the flower of the
rock that lifts its fair head unseen, and strows its withered
leaves on the blast?—*Ibid*.

She never told her love,
But let concealment, like a worm i' th' bud,
Feed on her damask cheek: she pin'd in thought,
And with a green and yellow melancholy,
She sat like Patience on a monument,
Smiling at Grief. *Shakspeare.*

Yet sadly it is sung, that she in shades,
Mildly as mourning doves, love's sorrow felt:
Whilst in her secret tears, her freshness fades,
As roses silently in lymbecks melt. *Davenant.*

As streams which with their winding banks do play,
Stopp'd by their creek, run softly through the plains;
So in th' ears labyrinth the voice doth stray,
And doth with easy motion touch the brain. *Davies.*

Fir'd at first sight with what the muse imparts,
In fearless youth we tempt the height of arts,
While from the bounded level of our mind
Short views we take, nor see the lengths behind;
But more advanc'd, behold, with strange surprise,
New distant scenes of endless science rise.
So pleas'd at first the tow'ring Alps we try,
Mount o'er the vales, and seem to tread the sky:
Th' eternal snows appear already past,
And the first clouds and mountains seem the last;
But, these attain'd, we tremble to survey
The growing labours of the lengthen'd way;
Th' increasing prospect tires our wandering eyes;
Hills peep o'er hills, and Alps on Alps arise. *Pope.*

This last comparison, in the opinion of Dr. Johnson, is perhaps the best that English poetry can show.*

The long-demurring maid,
Whose lonely unappropriated sweets
Smil'd like yon knot of cowslips on the cliff,
Not to be come at by the willing hand. *Blair.*

Few similies, says Dr. Anderson, can exceed this for elegant simplicity.† It likewise tends to place the principal subject in the strongest light.

Another effect of comparison is to embellish the principal subject by associating it with others that are of an agreeable nature. Similes of this kind have also a separate effect; they diversify the narration by means of new images which are not strictly necessary to the comparison. They are short episodes, which, without drawing us from the principal subject, afford delight by their beauty and variety.

He scarce had ceas'd, when the superior fiend
Was moving towards the shore; his pond'rous shield,
Ethereal temper, massy large and round,
Behind him cast; the broad circumference
Hung on his shoulders like the moon whose orb
Through optic glass the Tuscan artist views
At ev'ning from the top of Fesole,
Or in Valdarno, to descry new lands,
Rivers or mountains, in her spotty globe. *Milton.*

With regard to similes of this kind, it will readily occur to the reader that, when a resembling subject is once properly introduced, the mind is transitorily amused with the new object, and not dissatisfied with the slight interruption. Thus in fine weather, the momentary excursions of a traveller for agreeable

* Johnson's Life of Pope.

† Anderson's Life of Blair.

prospects or elegant buildings, cheer his mind, relieve him from the languor of uniformity, and without much lengthening his journey in reality, shorten it greatly in appearance. A writer may, however, happen to make too long a digression; and, in the opinion of some critics, Milton has more than once been guilty of this fault. The following quotation was probably intended as a burlesque of such long and digressive similes.

Not blacker tube, nor of a shorter size,
Smokes Cambro-Briton (vers'd in pedigree,
Sprung from Cadwalador and Arthur, kings
Full famous in romantic tale) when he
O'er many a craggy hill and barren cliff,
Upon a cargo of famed Cestrian cheese,
High over-shadowing rides, with a design
To vend his wares, or at th' Arvonian mart,
Or Maridunum, or the ancient town
Yclep'd Brechinia, or where Vaga's stream
Encircles Ariconium, fruitful soil!
Whence flow nectareous wines, that well may vie
With Massic, Setin, or renown'd Falern. *Phillips.*

Comparisons which tend to aggrandize or elevate an object, are next to be exemplified.

As rusheth a foamy stream from the dark shady steep of Cromla, when thunder is rolling above, and dark brown night rests on the hill; so fierce, so vast, so terrible, rush forward the sons of Erin. The chief, like a whale of ocean followed by all its billows, pours valour forth as a stream, rolling its might along the shore.—*Ossian.*

Ten paces huge
He back recoil'd; the tenth on bended knee
His massy spear upstaid; as if on earth
Winds under ground or waters forcing way,
Sidelong had pushed a mountain from his seat
Half-sunk with all his pines. *Milton.*

Methinks, king Richard and myself should meet
 With no less terror than the elements
 Of fire and water, when their thund'ring shock
 At meeting tears the cloudy cheeks of heav'n.—*Shakspeare.*

In the last place, it was observed that a comparison may tend to lessen or depress an object. This is accomplished by assimilating the principal subjects to any thing low or despicable.

The overthrown he rais'd, and, as a herd
 Of goats or timorous flocks together throng'd,
 Drove them before him thunder-struck, pursu'd
 With terrors and with furies to the bounds
 And chrystal wall of heav'n, which opening wide,
 Roll'd inward, and a spacious gap disclos'd
 Into the wasteful deep; the monstrous sight
 Struck them with horror backward, but far worse
 Urged them behind; headlong themselves they threw
 Down from the verge of heav'n. *Milton.*

In the foregoing enumeration, I have not adverted to comparisons introduced for the sake of placing some object in a ridiculous point of view. Of these I shall now add a few examples.

I do here walk before thee, like a sow that hath overwhelmed all her litter but one.—*Shakspeare.*

The most accomplished way of using books at present, is to serve them as men do lords, learn their titles, and then brag of their acquaintance.—*Swift's Tale of a Tub.*

Some think that the spirit is apt to feed on the flesh, like hungry wines upon raw beef.—*Swift on the Mechan. Oper. of the Spirit.*

Remark your commonest pretender to a light within, how dark, and gloomy and dirty he is without; as lanthorns, which the more light they bear in their bodies, cast out so much the more soot, and smoke, and fuliginous matter to adhere to the sides.—*Ibid.*

Some again think, that when our earthly tabernacles are disordered and desolate, shaken and out of repair, the spirit delights to dwell within them, as houses are said to be haunted when they are forsaken and gone to decay.—*Ibid.*

Here it may not be amiss to add a few words upon the laudable practice of wearing quilted caps. These, when moistened with sweat, stop all perspiration; and, by reverberating the heat, prevent the spirit from evaporating any way, but at the mouth; even as a skilful housewife that covers her still with a wet clout for the same reason, and finds the same effect.—*Ib.*

Seminaries of learning, as well as particular shops, are sometimes frequented more on account of what they have been, than what they are: so many instances of this might be produced, that it seems to be a prevailing opinion in this island, that talents and genius, like cats, are more attached to particular walls and houses than to the persons who reside within them.

[*Moore's Edward.*]

A comparison is sometimes implied where it is not formally expressed.

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;
Hands that the rod of empire might have sway'd,
Or wak'd to ecstasy the living lyre.

But knowledge to their eyes her ample page,
Rich with the spoils of time did ne'er unroll;
Chill penury repress'd their noble rage,
And froze the genial current of the soul.

Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear;
Full many a flower is born to-bud unſeen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Gray;

I. A comparison must not be instituted between objects which bear too near and obvious a resemblance to each other. The great pleasure of the act of comparing lies in discovering likenesses between things of different species, where we would not, at the first

glance, expect a resemblance. There is little art or ingenuity in pointing out resemblances which cannot escape the most careless observer. When Milton compares Satan's appearance after his fall, to that of the sun suffering an eclipse, and affrighting the nations with portentous darkness, we are struck with the happiness and the dignity of the similitude. But, when he compares Eve's bower in Paradise to the arbour of Pomona, or Eve herself to a Dryad, or Wood-nymph, we receive little entertainment; every person sees that, in several respects, one arbour must of course resemble another arbour, and one beautiful woman another beautiful woman.

II. As comparisons ought not to be founded on likenesses too obvious, still less ought they to be founded on those which are too faint and remote.—When differences or resemblances are carried beyond certain bounds, they appear slight and trivial; and for that reason will not be relished by persons of taste. The following instance will probably amuse the reader: it is a quotation, not from a poet or orator, but from a grave author writing an institute of law.

Our student shall observe, that the knowledge of the law is like a deep well, out of which each man draweth according to the strength of his understanding. He that reacheth deepest, seeth the amiable and admirable secrets of the law, wherein I assure you the sages of the law in former times have had the deepest reach. And as the bucket in the depth is easily drawn to the uppermost part of the water, (for *nullum elementum in suo proprio loco est grave*,) but take it from the water, it cannot be drawn up but with great difficulty, so, albeit beginnings of this study seem difficult, yet when the professor of the law can dive into the depth, it is delightful, easy, and without any heavy burthen, so long as he keeps himself in his own proper element.—*Coke on Lyttleton.*

This mode of stretching comparisons is admirably exposed in the following passage.

Fluellen. I think it is in Macedon where Alexander is born: I tell you, Captain, if you look in the maps of the world, I warrant that you shall find, in the comparisons between Macedon and Monmouth, that the situations, look you, is both alike. There is a river in Macedon, there is also moreover a river in Monmouth; it is called Wye at Monmouth, but it is out of my prains what is the name of the other river; but it is all one, 'tis as like as my fingers to my fingers, and there is salmons in both. If you mark Alexander's life well, Harry of Monmouth's life is come after it indifferent well; for there is figures in all things. Alexander, God knows, and you know, in his rages, and his furies, and his wraths, and his cholera, and his moods, and his displeasures, and his indignations, and also being a little intoxicates in his prains, did, in his ales and his angers, look you, kill his best friend Clytus.

Gower. Our king is not like him in that; he never kill'd any of his friends.

Fluellen. It is not well done, mark you now, to take the tales out of my mouth, ere it is made and finished. I speak but in figures, and comparisons of it: as Alexander killed his friend Clytus, being in his ales and his cups; so also Harry of Monmouth, being in his right wits, and his good judgments, turn'd away the fat knight with the great belly doublet; he was full of jests, and gypes, and knaveries, and mocks: I have forgot his name.

Gower. Sir John Falstaff.

Fluellen. That is he: I tell you, there is good men born at Monmouth.—*Shakspeare's Henry V.*

III. The object from which a comparison is drawn, should never be one of which but few people can form clear and distinct ideas. Comparisons are introduced into discourse, for the sake of throwing light on the subject. We must, therefore, be upon our guard, not to employ, as the ground of our simile, any object

which is either too obscure or unknown. That which is used for the purpose of illustrating some other object, ought certainly to be more obvious and plain than the object intended to be illustrated. Comparisons, therefore, founded on philosophical discoveries, or on any thing with which persons of a certain profession only are acquainted, do not produce their proper effect in any piece intended for the public at large. They should be taken from those illustrious, noted objects, which the majority of readers either have seen, or can strongly conceive.

IV. A writer of delicacy will avoid drawing his comparisons from any image that is nauseous, ugly, or remarkably disagreeable; for, however striking the resemblance may be, the reader will be more strongly affected with sensations of disgust, than with those of pleasure.

V. The strongest objection which can be urged against a comparison, is, that it consists in words only, not in sense. Such false coin is suitable in the burlesque; but it is far beneath the dignity of the epic, or of any serious composition. It is disputed among critics, whether the following simile be of this description:

The noble sister of Poplicola,
The moon of Rome; chaste as the icicle
That's curdled by the frost from purest snow,
And hangs on Dian's temple. *Shakespeare.*

"There is," says Lord Kames, "evidently no resemblance between an icicle and a woman, chaste or unchaste: but chastity is cold in a metaphorical sense; and this verbal resemblance, in the hurry and glow of composition, has been thought a sufficient foundation for the simile. Such phantom similes are mere wit-

ticisms, which ought to have no quarter, except where purposely introduced to provoke laughter.”*

“This,” says Mr. Goldsmith, “is no more than illustrating a quality of the mind, by comparing it with a sensible object. If there is no impropriety in saying such a man is true as steel, firm as a rock, inflexible as an oak, unsteady as the ocean, or in describing a disposition cold as ice, or fickle as the wind; and these expressions are justified by practice; we shall hazard an assertion, that the comparison of a chaste woman to an icicle is proper and picturesque, as it obtains only in the circumstances of cold and purity; but that the addition of its being curdled from the purest snow and hanging on the temple of Diana, the patroness of virginity, heightens the whole into a most beautiful simile.”†

CHAPTER XVII.

Of Metaphor.

ONE of the most pleasing exercises of the imagination, is that in which she is employed in comparing distinct ideas, and discovering their various resemblances. There is no simple perception of the mind that is not capable of an infinite number of considerations in reference to other objects; and it is in the novelty and variety of those unexpected connexions, that the richness of a writer's genius is chiefly dis-

* Kames's Elements of Criticism, chapter xix.

† Goldsmith's Essay, vol. ii. Essay xvii.

played. A vigorous and lively fancy does not tamely confine itself to the idea which lies before it, but looks beyond the immediate objects of its contemplation, and observes how it stands in conformity with numberless others. It is the prerogative of the human mind thus to bring its images together, and compare the several circumstances of similitude which attend them. By these means, eloquence exercises a kind of magic power; she can raise innumerable beauties from the most barren subjects, and give the grace of novelty to the most common. The imagination is thus kept awake by the most agreeable motion, and entertained with a thousand different views both of art and nature, which still terminate at the principal object. For this reason, the metaphor is generally preferred to the simile, as a more pleasing mode of illustration. In the former, the action of the mind is less languid, as it is employed at the very same instant in comparing the resemblance with the idea which it attends: whereas in the latter, its operations are more slow, as it must first contemplate the principal object, and afterwards its corresponding image.

A metaphor differs from a simile in form only, not in substance; the comparison being the foundation of both. In a simile, the two subjects are kept distinct in the expression, as well as in the thought; in a metaphor, they are kept distinct in the thought, but not in the expression. A hero resembles a lion, and upon that resemblance, many similes have been founded by Homer and other poets. But let us call in the aid of the imagination, and figure the hero to be a lion instead of only resembling one; by that variation the simile is converted into a metaphor, which is carried on by describing all the qualities of the lion which

resemble those of the hero. The poet, by figuring his hero to be a lion, proceeds to describe the lion in appearance; but in reality he is all the while describing the hero; and his description becomes peculiarly beautiful, by expressing the virtues and qualities of the hero in terms which properly belong not to him, but to the lion. When I say of some great minister, "that he upholds the state like a pillar which supports the weight of a whole edifice," I evidently frame a comparison; but when I say of the same minister, "that he is a pillar of the state," this is not a comparison, but a metaphor. The comparison between the minister and a pillar, is carried on in the mind; but is made without any of the words which denote comparison. The comparison is only insinuated, not expressed; the one object is supposed to be so like the other, that, without formally drawing the comparison, the name of the one may be substituted for that of the other.

A metaphor always implies comparison, and is, in that respect, a figure of thought; yet, as the words in which it is conveyed are not taken literally, but changed from their proper to a figurative sense, the metaphor is commonly ranked among tropes, or figures of words. But, provided the nature of it be well understood, it is of little importance whether we denominate it a trope or a figure.

"The description of natural objects," says Mr. Roscoe, "awakes in the poet's mind, corresponding emotions; as his heart warms, his fancy expands, and he labours to convey a more distinct or a more elevated idea of the impressions of his own imagination.—Hence the origin of figures, or figurative language; in the use of which, he aims at describing his princ-

pal subject, by the qualities of some other object more generally known, or more striking in its nature. These figures of poetry have furnished the philologists of ancient and modern times with a great variety of minute distinctions, but many of them consist rather in form than in substance; comparison, express or implied, will be found to be the essence of them all.”*

Although the word metaphor has been confined to the expression of resemblance between two objects, yet it is sometimes used in a looser and more extended sense; it denotes the application of a term in any figurative signification, whether the figure be founded on resemblance, or on some other relation which two objects bear to each other. When gray hairs are substituted for old age, some writers would call this a metaphor, though in propriety of language, it is only what rhetoricians term a metonymy; that is, the effect for the cause. Gray hairs are the effect of old age; but they do not bear any resemblance to it.

Aristotle, in his *Poetics*, uses the term metaphor in its extended sense, for any figurative meaning imposed upon a word; as a whole put for the part, or a part for the whole; a species for the genus, or a genus for the species. But it would be unjust to tax this most acute philosopher with any inaccuracy on this account; the minute subdivisions of tropes being totally unknown in his days.

Every writer ought to become a painter as far as the subject which he treats will permit him. Our thoughts are susceptible of different colourings: taken separately, each has a colour proper to itself; when combined, they lend each other mutual light and

* Roscoe's *Life of Lorenzo de Medici*, vol. i. p. 347.

shade: and the art of the writer consists in delicately tracing their reflected tints.* Of all the figures of speech, none approaches so near to painting as metaphor. Its peculiar effect is to add light and strength to description; to make intellectual ideas, in some sort visible to the eye, by giving them colour, and substance, and sensible qualities. To produce this effect, however, a very delicate hand is required; for, by the smallest degree of inaccuracy, we are in hazard of introducing confusion, instead of promoting perspicuity. There is nothing in which a fine writer is so much distinguished from one of an ordinary class, as in the conduct and application of this figure. He is at liberty to range through the whole compass of creation, and collect his images from every object which surrounds him. But though he may thus be amply furnished with materials, great judgment is required in selecting them: for, to render a metaphor perfect, it must be not only apposite, but pleasing; it must entertain, as well as enlighten.

I. Metaphors should be suited to the nature of the subject of which we treat: neither too many, nor too gay, nor too elevated for it; that we may neither attempt to force the subject, by means of them, into a degree of elevation which is not consistent with it; nor, on the other hand, allow it to sink below its proper dignity. These directions apply to figurative language in general, and should always be kept in view. Some metaphors are allowable, nay beautiful, in poetry, which it would be absurd to employ in prose: some may be graceful in orations, which would be very improper in historical or philosophical composi-

* Condillac, *Traite de l'Art d'Ecrire*, liv. ii. chap. vi.

tion. Figures are the dress of our sentiments. There is a natural congruity between the dress, and the character or rank of the person who wears it. The same is the case with regard to figures and sentiments. The excessive or unseasonable employment of figures, is mere foppery in writing: it gives a puerile air to composition; and diminishes the dignity of a subject rather than exalts it. For as, in real life, true dignity is founded on character, not on dress and parade; so the dignity of composition must arise from intelligence and thought, not from ornament. The same sentiment is happily inculcated by a very able writer, in one of his masterly sermons. "There is," says Dr. Brown, "a certain taste in character and in moral judgment, as well as in the fine arts, which can be acquired only by a sound understanding, improved by extensive observation, and by opportunities of contemplating the best models of virtue which our present degraded and miserable state can afford. Striking but incoherent design, tumid and extravagant diction, passion affected and ill placed, glaring colouring, and meretricious ornament of every kind, are, by uncultivated minds, preferred to the just proportion, the modest simplicity, and the chaste elegance of nature."

Figures and metaphors should, upon no occasion be scattered with too profuse a hand; and they should never be incongruous with the train of our sentiment. Nothing can be more unnatural, than for a writer to carry on a process of reasoning, in the same kind of figurative language which he would employ in description. When he reasons, we look only for perspicuity; when he describes, we expect embellishment; when he divides or relates, we desire plainness and simplicity. One of the greatest secrets in composition is, to know

when to be simple. This always lends a heightening to ornament, in its proper place. The judicious disposition of shade makes the light and colouring strike the more. He is truly eloquent, who can discourse of humble subjects in a plain style, who can treat important ones with dignity, and speak of things which are of a middle nature, in a temperate strain. For one who, upon no occasion, can express himself in a calm, orderly, distinct manner, when he begins to be on fire before his readers are prepared to kindle along with him, has the appearance of a madman raving among persons who enjoy the use of their reason, or of a drunkard reeling in the midst of sober company.

The following quotation affords an instance of metaphorical language rising to bombast.

The bill underwent a great number of alterations and amendments, which were not effected without violent contest: at length, however, it was floated through both houses, on the tide of a great majority, and steered into the safe harbour of royal approbation.—*Smollett's History of England.*

II. Metaphors should never be drawn from objects which are mean and disagreeable. Even when introduced to vilify and degrade any subject, an author should study never to be nauseous in his allusions. But in subjects of dignity, it is an unpardonable fault to employ metaphors which are mean and vulgar. All Nature opens her stores to us, and admits us to gather from all sensible objects, whatever can illustrate intellectual or moral ideas. Not only the gay and splendid objects of sense, but the grave, the terrifying, and even the gloomy and dismal, may, on different occasions, be introduced into figures with propriety. But we must always be cautious and select in our choice.

In the following passage there occurs an unpardonable breach of this obvious rule.

Some bad poems carry their owners' marks about them: some brand or other on this *buttock* or that ear, that it is notorious who is the owner of the cattle.—*Dryden, Dedication of Juvenal.*

III. But, besides a certain decorum which is requisite to constitute a perfect metaphor, a writer of true taste and genius will always select the most obvious images, and place them in the unobserved points of resemblance. Every metaphor should carry the appearance of having been led, not of having forced itself into the place of that word, whose room it occupies: it should seem to have come thither of its own accord, and not by constraint. All allusions which point to the more abstruse branches of the arts or sciences, and with which none can be supposed to be acquainted but those who have penetrated far into the deeper studies, should be carefully avoided, not only as pedantic, but as impertinent: they pervert the use of this figure, and add neither grace nor force to the idea which they would elucidate. The most pleasing metaphors, therefore, are those which are derived from the most frequent occurrences of art or nature, or the civil transactions and customs of mankind.—Thus how expressive, yet at the same time, how familiar, is that image which Otway has put into the mouth of Metellus, in his tragedy of *Caius Marius*, where he calls Sulpitius

That mad bull whom Marius lets loose
On each occasion, when he'd make Rome feel him,
To toss our laws and liberties i' th' air.

The transgression of the above rules, forms what are called harsh or forced metaphors. With metaphors of this kind, Johnson, Donne, Cowley, and other

poets of the same class, abound. They seem to have considered it as the perfection of wit, to trace likenesses which no other person could have discovered: and at the same time they carry these metaphors so far, that it requires some ingenuity to follow them out, and comprehend them. Instead of illustrating the subject of which they treat, their metaphors generally cast around it a cloud of impenetrable darkness.

Some writers endeavour to palliate the harshness of their metaphors, by interposing such mitigating phrases as, *so to speak, as it were, if I may be allowed the expressions*: and this method has received the sanction of Aristotle, Theophrastus, Longinus, Cicero, and Quintilian. Notwithstanding the authority of such great names, it must certainly be allowed that any of these phrases, forms a very awkward parenthesis: and perhaps metaphors which require such an apology, would be better omitted.

IV. In constructing a metaphor, the writer ought to confine himself to the simplest expressions, and to make use of such words only as are literally applicable to the imagined nature of his subject. Figurative words ought carefully to be avoided: for such complicated figures, instead of placing the principal subject in a clear light, involve it in obscurity.

A stubborn and unconquerable flame

Creeps in his veins, and drinks the streams of life.—*Rowe.*

That a fever may be imagined a flame, I admit; though more steps than one, are necessary to come at the resemblance: a fever, by heating the body, resembles fire; and it requires no effort to imagine a fever to be a fire; again, by a figure of speech, flame may be put for fire, because they are commonly conjoined; and therefore a fever may be termed a flame. But admit-

ting this, the effects of the fever ought to be explained in words which apply to a flame in a literal sense. This rule, however, is not observed; for a flame *drinks* figuratively only, not properly.

I am convinced that the method of teaching which approaches most nearly to the method of investigation, is incomparably the best, since not content with serving up a few barren and lifeless truths, it leads to the stalk on which they grow.—*Burke on the Sublime and Beautiful.*

The metaphor which occurs in the latter part of this sentence, is of the same description. Truth is here figured to be the fruit of a tree; but the epithet *lifeless* can only be applied metaphorically to fruits.

There is not a single view of human nature, which is not sufficient to extinguish the seeds of pride.—*Addison, Spectator.*

When a seed has lost its power of vegetation, we might say, in a metaphorical sense, it is extinguished; but when, in the same sense, we call that disposition of the heart which produces pride, the seed of passion; we cannot, without introducing a confusion of ideas, apply any word to seed, but what corresponds with its real properties or circumstances.

V. Different metaphors ought never to be confused together in the same sentence. The use of mixed metaphor, is one of the grossest abuses of this figure. Some writers begin sentences with storms and tempests, and close them with fire and flames.

Though in their corrupt notions of divine worship, they are apt to multiply their gods, yet their earthly devotion is seldom paid to above one idol at a time, whose oar they pull with less murmuring and much more skill, than when they share the lading, or even hold the helm.—*Swift on the Contests and Dissensions in Athens and Rome.*

The most injudicious writer could not have been be-

trayed into a more absurd inconsistency of metaphor. The favourite of the people is first an idol; and in the very next clause, he is figured to be a vessel. What connexion is there between worshipping and rowing, and who ever heard before of pulling the oar of an idol?

Women were formed to temper mankind, not to set an edge upon their minds, and blow up in them, those passions which are apt to rise of their own accord.—*Addison, Spectator.*

The act of setting an edge, and the act of blowing up, bear no analogy to each other.

The charm dissolves apace,
And as the morning steals upon the night,
Melting the darkness, so their rising senses
Begin to chase the ignorant fumes that mantle
Their clearer reason. *Shakspeare.*

So many ill-consorted ideas are here brought together, that the mind can see nothing clearly;—the morning stealing upon the darkness, and at the same time melting it; the senses of men chasing fumes, and fumes that mantle.

As glorious
As is a winged messenger from heaven,
Unto the white upturned wandering eyes
Of mortals, that fall back to gaze on him,
When he bestrides the lazy-pacing clouds,
And sails upon the bosom of the air.—*Shakspeare.*

Here the angel is represented at one instant as bestriding the clouds and sailing upon the air; and upon the bosom of the air too. This forms a picture too confused for the imagination to comprehend.

All then is full, possessing and possest,
No craving void left aching in the breast.—*Pope.*

A void may, in a metaphorical sense, be said to crave; but can a void be said to ache?

I bridle in my struggling Muse with pain,
That longs to launch into a bolder strain.—*Addison.*

To bridle a goddess is no very delicate idea; but why must she be bridled? because she longs to launch; an act which was never hindered by a bridle: and whither would she launch? into a nobler strain. In the first line she is a horse, in the second a boat; and the care of the poet is to keep his horse or his boat from singing.*

A good rule has been suggested for examining the propriety of metaphors, when we suspect them to be of a mixed kind: we should consider what sort of a figure the image they present to the mind would exhibit upon canvas. By this method, we should become sensible whether incongruous circumstances were mixed, or the object was presented in one natural and consistent point of view.

VI. It is unpleasant to find different metaphors joined in the same period, even where they are preserved distinct. The rapid transition distracts the mind: and the images are rendered too faint to produce any powerful effect upon the imagination.

VII. Metaphorical and proper expressions ought never to be so interwoven together, that part of the sentence must be understood figuratively and part literally. The imagination cannot follow, with sufficient ease, changes so sudden and unprepared. A metaphor begun, and not carried on, has no beauty. Instances of such incorrect composition are without number; but I shall content myself with giving a single example.

When thus, as I may say, before the use of the loadstone, or knowledge of the compass, I was sailing in a vast ocean, with-

* Johnson's Life of Addison.

out other help than the pole-star of the ancients, and the rules of the French stage among the moderns.—*Dryden's Dedication of Juvenal.*

Here the writer suddenly falls from the polar-star, and alights upon the French stage.

VIII. Metaphors should not be too far pursued. If the resemblance on which the figure is founded, be long dwelt upon, and carried into all its minute circumstances, we form an allegory instead of a metaphor; we fatigue the reader with this play of fancy, and likewise render our discourse obscure. This is called hunting a metaphor down. Lord Shaftesbury is sometimes guilty of pursuing his metaphors too far. Fond, to an uncommon degree, of every decoration of style, when he has once adopted a figure which pleases him, he always seems unwilling to part with it.—Thus, having represented soliloquy under the metaphor of a proper method of evacuation for an author, he pursues the figure through several pages, under all the forms “of discharging crudities, throwing off froth and scum, bodily operation, taking physic, curing indigestion, giving vent to choler, bile, flatulencies and tumours,”* till, at last, the idea becomes perfectly nauseous and disgusting.

IX. There is a double beauty in figures of this kind when they are not only metaphors, but allusions.—Thus, a very original poet, speaking of the advantages of exercise in dissipating those gloomy vapours which are apt to hang upon some minds, employs the following image:

Throw but a stone, the giant dies.—*Green.*

The metaphor here is conceived with great propriety of thought, if we consider it only in its primary view;

* Shaftesbury's Advice to an Author.

but when we see it pointing still farther, and hinting at the story of David and Goliath, it receives a very considerable improvement from the double application.

Several examples of impropriety in the use of metaphor, have been pointed out: we shall now turn to the contemplation of examples of a different kind.

'Tis the sunset of life gives me mystical lore,
And coming events cast their shadows before.—*Campbell.*

O! when the growling winds contend, and all
The sounding forest fluctuates in the storm,
To sink in warm repose, and hear the din
Howl o'er the steady battlements. *Armstrong.*

Here the word *fluctuates*, is used with admirable efficacy: it not only exhibits an image of struggling, but also echoes to the sense.* The metaphor is simple and consistent: it depends upon the resemblance between the waves of the sea, and the violent agitation of trees during a storm.

I have sometimes considered the bosom of an old maid, as a kind of cell, in which it was intended that the lively bee, affection, should treasure up its collected sweets; but this bee happening to perish, before it could properly settle on the flowers that should afford its wealth, the vacant cell may unluckily become the abode of that drone, indifference, or of the wasp malignity.—*Hayley's Essay on Old Maids.*

Talents, disjoined from kindness, meekness, and charity, are not those glorious luminaries that shed their benignant influence on earth, but the glaring lightning that alarms, and blasts, and ravages whatever is placed in its way.—*Brown's Sermons.*

Addison, in his excellent critique on *Paradise Lost*, is taking notice of those changes in nature, which the author of that truly divine poem describes as immediately succeeding the fall. Among other prodigies,

* Goldsmith's *Essays*, vol. ii. Essay xvii.

Milton represents the sun in an eclipse, and at the same time a bright cloud in the western regions of the heavens, descending with a band of angels. The critic, to show his author's art and judgment in the conduct and disposition of this sublime scenery, employs the following metaphor:

The whole theatre of nature is darkened, that this glorious machine may appear in all its lustre and magnificence.

Here the figure is beautiful and expressive.

Speaking of the behaviour of Charles the first to his last parliament:

About a month after their meeting, he dissolved them; and as soon as he dissolved them, he repented; but he repented too late of his rashness. Well might he repent; for the vessel was now full, and this last drop made the waters of bitterness overflow. Here we draw the curtain, and put an end to our remarks.—*Bolingbroke's Remarks on the History of England.*

Nothing could be more happily conducted. A figure of this kind, judiciously managed, forms a spirited and dignified conclusion to a subject. The author retires with a good grace, and leaves a strong impression on the reader's mind.

The judicious use of metaphor serves to add light to the expression, and energy to the sentiment. But, on the contrary, when this figure is unskilfully employed, it tends effectually to cloud the sense; and upon some occasions, may even tend to conceal the author's want of meaning. This may happen, not only when there is in the same sentence a mixture of discordant metaphors, but also where the metaphorical style is too long continued, or too far pursued. The reason is obvious. In common speech, the words are the immediate signs of the thought. But here the case is different: for when the writer, instead of

adopting such metaphors as naturally and opportunely present themselves, rummages the universe in quest of these flowers of oratory, and piles them one above another; when he cannot so properly be said to use metaphor, as to speak in metaphor, or rather from metaphor, he runs into allegory, and thence into ænigma; his words cannot be affirmed to be the *immediate* signs of his thoughts; they are the signs of the signs of his thoughts. His composition may then be termed what Spenser styles his *Faery Queen*, "a perpetual allegory or dark conceit."

Writers that fall into this error, are often misled by a desire of flourishing on the several attributes of a metaphor which they have pompously ushered into their discourse, without taking the trouble to examine whether there be any qualities in the subject, to which these attributes can with justice and perspicuity be applied. Of exuberance of metaphor, I shall produce one example.

Men must acquire a very peculiar and strong habit of turning their eye inwards, in order to explore the interior regions and recesses of the mind, the hollow caverns of deep thought, the private seats of fancy, and the wastes and wildernesses, as well as the more fruitful and cultivated tracts of this obscure climate.—*Shaftesbury's Miscellaneous Reflections.*

Here the author having determined to represent the human mind under the metaphor of a country, revolves in his thoughts the various objects which might be found in a country, but has never dreamt of considering whether there be any common points of resemblance between these subjects of his figure. Hence the strange parade he makes with *regions, recesses, hollow caverns, private seats, wastes, wildernesses, fruitful and cultivated tracts*; terms which, though they have

an appropriate meaning as applied to a country, have no definite signification when applied to mind. Some objects may, without impropriety, be alluded to in a cursory manner, though they will become ridiculous by being too long tortured in a figure or trope. Thus, notwithstanding the impropriety of the passage now quoted from Shaftesbury, there is nothing reprehensible in the following couplet, which contains a metaphor of the same nature and origin.

Farewell, for clearer ken design'd,
The dim-discover'd tracts of mind.—*Collins.*

CHAPTER XVIII.

Of Allegory.

AN allegory may be considered as a continued metaphor. It consists in representing one subject by another analogous to it. The subject thus represented, is kept out of view; and we are left to discover it by reflection. This furnishes a very pleasant exercise to our faculties.

There cannot be a finer or more correct allegory than the following, in which the Jewish nation is represented under the symbol of a vineyard.

Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt; thou hast cast out the heathen and planted it. Thou preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land. The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. Why hast thou broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by that way do pluck her? The bear out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beasts of

the field doth devour it. Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts; look down from heaven, and behold and visit this vine, and the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch which thou madest strong for thyself.—*Psalms*.

Here there is no circumstance that does not strictly agree with a vine; while at the same time, the whole quadrates happily with the Jewish state represented by this figure. It is the principal requisite in the conduct of an allegory, that the figurative and the literal meaning be not inconsistently mixed together. If, instead of describing the vine as wasted by the boar out of the wood, and devoured by the wild beasts of the field, the psalmist had said, that it was afflicted by heathens, or overcome by enemies, this would have ruined the allegory, and produced the same confusion that has been remarked in those metaphors in which the figurative and literal sense are confounded together. Indeed, the rules which have been given with respect to metaphors may also be applied to allegories, on account of the affinity that they bear to each other. The only material difference between them, besides the one being short, and the other prolonged, is, that a metaphor always explains itself by the words which are connected with it in their proper and natural meaning. When I say, "Wallace was a thunderbolt of war," "in peace, Fingal was the gale of spring," the thunderbolt of war and the gale of spring, are sufficiently interpreted by the mention of Wallace and Fingal. But an allegory may be allowed to stand more unconnected with the literal meaning; the interpretation is not so directly pointed out, but left to our own discovery.

Allegories were a favourite method of delivering instruction in ancient times; for what we call fables or

parables, are no other than allegories; and those fables are to be found among the earliest productions of literature. They represent the dispositions of men by words and actions attributed to beasts and inanimate objects; and what we call the moral, is the simple meaning of the allegory. An ænigma or riddle, is also a figure of this kind. One thing is imaged by another, but purposely rendered obscure by being involved in a complication of circumstances. Where a riddle is not intended, it is always a fault in allegory to be too dark. The meaning should be easily seen through the figure employed to shadow it. The proper mixture of light and shade in such compositions, the exact adjustment of all the figurative circumstances with the literal sense, so as neither to lay the meaning too open, nor to cover it too closely, has ever been found an affair of great nicety; and in allegorical compositions of any length, few writers have succeeded.

An allegory is in every respect similar to a hieroglyphical painting, excepting only that words are used instead of colours. Their effects are precisely the same; a hieroglyphic raises two images in the mind; one seen, which represents one not seen. The same is the case with an allegory: the representative subject is described; and the resemblance leads us to apply the description to the subject represented.

Nothing affords greater pleasure than this figure, when the representative subject bears a strong analogy, in all its circumstances, to that which is represented. But the choice is seldom so fortunate; the analogy being generally so faint and obscure as to puzzle, instead of pleasing. An allegory is still more difficult in painting than in writing: the former can show no resemblance but what appears to the eye; whereas the latter has many other resources.

In an allegory, as well as in a metaphor, such terms ought to be chosen as are literally applicable to the representative subject: nor ought any circumstance to be added that is not proper to that subject, however justly it may apply to the principal, either in a figurative or proper sense. Our view must never wave between the type and the anti-type.

For the further illustration of the nature of allegory, I shall subjoin a few miscellaneous examples.*

My well-beloved had a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: and he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a wine-press therein; and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now, go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard; I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up, and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down. And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned nor digged; but there shall come up briars and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it; for the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant.—*Isaiah*.

Wise men ne'er sit and wail their loss,
But cheerly seek how to redress their harms.
What though the mast be now blown overboard,
The cable broke, the holding anchor lost,
And half our sailors swallowed in the flood?
Yet lives our pilot still. Is't meet that he
Should leave the helm, and, like a fearful lad,
With tearful eyes add water to the sea,

* Various remarks on allegorical composition, occur in Mr. Warson's *Observations on Spencer*, 2 vols, 8vo.

And give more strength to that which hath too much;
While in his moan the ship splits on the rock,
Which industry and courage might have sav'd?—*Shakespeare.*

Ha! thou hast rous'd
The lion in his den; he stalks abroad,
And the wide forest trembles at his roar.—*Southerne.*

Did I but purpose to embark with thee
On the smooth surface of a summer's sea,
While gentle zephyrs play with prosperous gales,
And Fortune's favour fills the swelling sails;
But would forsake the ship and make the shore,
When the winds whistle and the tempests roar?—*Prior.*

CHAPTER XIX.

Of the Concise and the Diffuse Style.

It has already been hinted that, as words are copies of our ideas, there must always be a very intimate connexion between the manner in which every writer employs words, and his manner of thinking; and that, by the peculiarity of his thought and expression, there is a certain character imprinted on his style, which may be denominated his manner. The terms which we use in order to express the general manner of different authors, bear some reference to their mode of thinking; but refer chiefly to their mode of expression. The distinctions of nervous and feeble, simple and affected, arise from the whole tenor of a writer's language; and comprehend the effect produced by all those parts of style which we have already considered: the choice which he makes of single words, his arrangement of these in sentences; the degree of his pre-

cision, and his embellishment, by means of musical cadence, or the various figures of speech.

That different subjects require to be treated in different sorts of style, is a position too evident to stand in need of illustration. Philosophy demands one kind of style, oratory another; and different parts of the same composition require a variation in the style and manner. But amidst this variety, we still expect to find, in the writings of the same individual, some degree of uniformity, or consistency with himself; we expect to find some predominant character of style impressed on all his works, which shall be suited to his particular genius, and turn of mind. Wherever there is real and native genius, it gives a determination to one kind of style rather than another. Where nothing of this description appears, where there is no marked or peculiar character in the compositions of an author, we are apt to infer that he writes from imitation, and not from the impulse of original genius.

One of the most obvious distinctions of style arises from the conciseness or the diffuseness with which an author expresses his sentiments. A concise writer compresses his thoughts into the fewest possible words; he employs none but such as are most significant; he lops off every vague and redundant expression. Ornament he does not reject; he may be lively and figurative, but his ornaments are introduced in order to add force to his diction. He never repeats the same thought. His sentences are arranged with compactness and strength, rather than with grace and harmony. The utmost precision is studied in them; and they are commonly designed to suggest more to the reader's imagination than they directly express. On the other

hand, a diffuse writer places his ideas in a variety of lights, and gives the reader every possible assistance for understanding them completely. He is not solicitous to express them at once in their full extent, because he generally repeats the impression; and what he wants in strength, he proposes to supply by copiousness. Writers of this character commonly love magnificence and amplification. Their periods naturally run out into some length; and, having room for ornament, they admit it freely.

Each of these manners has its peculiar advantages; and each becomes faulty when carried to the extreme. The extreme of conciseness degenerates into abruptness and obscurity; and is apt to introduce a style too pointed, and bordering on the epigrammatic. The extreme of diffuseness becomes weak and languid, and fatigues the reader. However, to one or other of these two manners, a writer may lean according as his genius prompts him; and under the general character of a concise, or of a diffuse style, may possess much beauty in his composition.

In judging when it is proper to incline to the concise, and when to the diffuse manner, we must be directed by the nature of the composition. Discourses which are to be spoken, require a more copious style, than books which are to be read. When the whole meaning must be caught from the mouth of the speaker without the advantage which books afford of pausing at pleasure, and reviewing what appears obscure, great conciseness is always to be avoided. We should never presume too much on the quickness of our hearer's understanding; but our style ought to be such, that any person of common capacity may comprehend our meaning without effort. A flowing, copious style,

therefore, is required in all public speakers. They ought at the same time to guard against such a degree of diffusion as renders them languid and tiresome.

In written compositions, a certain degree of conciseness possesses great advantages. It appears lively; keeps up the attention; makes a stronger impression; and gratifies the mind by supplying more exercise to the reader's faculties.—A concise, comprehensive style is a great ornament in narration; and a superfluity of unnecessary words, altogether improper. A judicious selection of striking circumstances, clothed in nervous and concise language, produces a delightful effect.—In addresses to the passions, the concise manner ought to be adopted, in preference to the diffuse. When we become prolix, we are always in hazard of cooling the reader. And when the imagination and heart are properly engaged, they supply many particulars to greater advantage than an author can display them. The case is different, when we address ourselves to the understanding; as in all matters of reasoning, explication, and instruction. There I would prefer a more free and diffuse manner. When you would captivate the fancy, or engage the heart, be concise; when you would inform the understanding, be more copious and diffuse. The understanding moves more slowly, and requires to be assisted in its operations.

A diffuse style generally abounds in long periods; and a concise style often in short ones. It is not, however, to be inferred that long or short sentences are fully characteristic of the one or the other. An author may always employ short periods, and yet be very diffuse: a scanty portion of sentiment may spread through a great number of those periods. Some authors, by the shortness and quaintness of their sentences, may at

first view appear very concise, without being so in reality. They transfigure the same thought into many different forms, and make it pass for a new one, only by giving a new turn to the expression. Thus, most of the French writers compose in short sentences; though their style in general is far from being concise. They commonly break down into two or three periods, a portion of thought which a British author would crowd into one. In like manner, an author may employ long periods, and yet be concise: his periods may be long without being overloaded with any redundancy of expression. Thus, in the writings of Lord Kames, we frequently meet with lengthened sentences, though seldom with errors in point of conciseness.

The direct tendency of short sentences is to render style brisk and lively, but not always concise. They keep the mind awake by means of quick successive impulses; and give to composition more of a spirited character. Long periods are grave and stately; but, like all grave things, they are apt to become dull.

The following quotation may serve as an instance of the copious and diffuse style.

I can easily admire poetry, and yet without adoring it; I can allow it to arise from the greatest excellence of natural temper, or the greatest race of native genius, without exceeding the reach of what is human, or giving it any approaches of divinity, which is, I doubt, debased or dishonoured by ascribing to it any thing that is in the compass of our action, or even comprehension, unless it be raised by an immediate influence from itself. I cannot allow poetry to be more divine in its effects than in its causes, nor any operation produced by it to be more than purely natural, or to deserve any other sort of wonder than those of music, or of natural magic, however any of them have appeared to minds little versed in the speculations of nature, of occult qualities, and the force of numbers or of sounds. Whoever talks of drawing down the moon from heaven by force of ver-

ses or of charms, either believes not himself, or too easily believes what others told him, or perhaps follows an opinion begun by the practice of some poet, upon the facility of some people, who, knowing the time when an eclipse would happen, told them he would by his charms call down the moon at such an hour, and was by them thought to have performed it.—When I read that charming description in Virgil's eighth Eclogue of all sorts of charms and fascinations by verses, by images, by knots, by numbers, by fire, by herbs, employed upon occasion of a violent passion, from a jealous or disappointed love; I have recourse to the strong impressions of fables and of poetry, to the easy mistakes of popular opinions, to the force of imagination, to the secret virtues of several herbs, and to the powers of sounds: and I am sorry the natural history, or account of fascination, has not employed the pen of some person of such excellent wit, and deep thought and learning, as Casaubon, who writ that curious and useful treatise of enthusiasm, and by it discovered the hidden or mistaken sources of that delusion, so frequent in all regions and religions of the world, and which had so fatally spread over our country in that age in which this treatise was so seasonably published. 'Tis much to be lamented that he lived not to complete that work in the second part he promised; or that his friends neglected the publishing it, if it were left in papers, though loose and unfinished. I think a clear account of enthusiasm and fascination, from their natural causes, would very much deserve from mankind in general, as well as from the commonwealth of learning; might perhaps prevent so many public disorders, and save the lives of so many innocent, deluded, or deluding people, who suffer so frequently upon account of witches and wizards. I have seen many miserable examples of this kind in my youth at home; and though the humour or fashion be a good deal worn out of the world, within thirty or forty years past, yet it still remains in several remote parts of Germany, Sweden, and some other countries.

[*Temple on Poetry.*]

Of the concise style, I shall likewise subjoin an example.

A man, while awake, is conscious of a continued train of perceptions and ideas passing in his mind. It requires no activity

on his part to carry on the train: nor can he at will add to the train any idea that has no connexion with it. At the same time we learn from daily experience, that the train of our thoughts is not regulated by chance; and if it depend not upon will, nor upon chance, by what law is it governed? The question is of importance in the science of human nature; and I promise beforehand, that it will be found of great importance in the fine arts.—It appears that the relations by which things are linked together, have a great influence in directing the train of thought. Taking a view of external objects, we see that their inherent properties are not more remarkable than their various relations which connect them together: one thing, perceived to be a cause, is connected with its several effects; some things are connected by contiguity in time, others by contiguity in space; some are connected by resemblance, some by contrast; some go before, some follow: not a single thing appears solitary and altogether devoid of connection; the only difference is, that some are intimately connected, some more slightly, some near, some at a distance.—Experience will satisfy us of what reason makes probable, that the train of our thoughts is in a great measure regulated by the foregoing connexions: an external object is no sooner presented to us in idea, than it suggests to the mind other objects with which it is connected; and in this manner is a train of thoughts composed. Such is the law of succession: whether an original law, or whether directed by some latent principle, is doubtful; and probably will for ever remain so. This law, however, is not inviolable; it sometimes happens, that an idea arises in the mind without that connexion; as for example, after a profound sleep — *Kames's Elements of Criticism*.

In this passage nothing is vague or redundant: every word and expression is appropriate.

Of all writers, ancient and modern, Aristotle, Tacitus, and Montesquieu, afford the most remarkable instances of conciseness in style. The language of Locke and Clarke, though far from being highly polished, is also concise, and, upon the whole, not badly adapted to the profound speculations of those authors. The style of Dr. Reid is entitled to no small praise on

account of the same quality. He always expresses himself with clearness, and seldom makes use of a word that could be changed for a better.

Of a beautiful and magnificent diffuseness, the works of Plato and Cicero exhibit, beyond doubt, the most illustrious instances that can be given. And, among our own countrymen, Temple, Addison, and Burke, afford examples of the same species of excellence.

CHAPTER XX.

Of the Nervous and the Feeble Style.

It is generally imagined that the terms nervous and feeble, when applied to style, are synonymous with concise and diffuse. This, however, is not the case. It is indeed true that diffuse writers have, for the most part, some degree of feebleness, and that nervous writers will generally incline to conciseness of expression; but this is by no means an universal rule. There are instances of writers who, in the midst of a full and copious style, have maintained a great degree of strength. And, on the other hand, an author may be parsimonious of his words, without attaining to any remarkable vigour of diction.

The foundations of a nervous or a weak style are laid in an author's manner of thinking. If his conceptions are strong, his expressions will be energetic. But if he have only an indistinct view of his subject; if his ideas be loose and wavering; if his genius be such, or, at the time of his writing, so carelessly exerted, that he has no firm hold of the conception which

he would communicate to us, the marks of all this will plainly appear in his style. Several unmeaning words and loose epithets will be found; his expressions will be vague and general; his arrangement indistinct and feeble. We shall be able to conceive somewhat of his meaning, but our conceptions will be faint. Whereas a nervous writer, whether he employ an extended or a concise style, gives us always a strong impression of his meaning: his mind is full of his subject, and his words are all expressive; every phrase and every figure which he uses, tends to render the pleasure which he would set before us, more lively and complete.

Every author, in every composition, ought to study to express himself with some degree of strength. In proportion as he approaches the feeble, he becomes a bad writer. In all kinds of writing, however, the same degree of strength is not required. But the more grave and weighty any composition is, the more should this quality predominate in the style. History, philosophy, and some species of oratory require it in an eminent degree; while in romances, epistles, and essays of a lighter cast, it is not so absolutely requisite.

Too great a study of strength, to the neglect of other desirable qualities of style, is apt to betray writers into a harshness of manner. Harshness arises from the use of unauthorized words, from forced inversions in the construction of sentences, and from the neglect of smoothness or harmony. This is reckoned the general fault of some of the earliest of our English classics; such as Bacon, Raleigh, Hooker, Milton, and other writers of those days. The style of these writers is, for the most part, nervous and energetic in an eminent degree: but the language, in their hands was very different from what it is at present. They were

too fond of Latin idioms: in the structure of their sentences, inversion is often carried to an unwarrantable length. Of that kind of style which is here alluded to, it will be proper to produce a few examples.

Though for no other cause, yet for this, that posterity may know we have not loosely, through silence, permitted things to pass away as in a dream, there shall be for men's information, extant this much concerning the present state of the church of God established amongst us, and their careful endeavours which would have upheld the same.—*Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity.*

We see scholars many, more than others ordinarily, subject to melancholy, because their retired courses of life, and privacy of study is a great means to feed that humour where it is naturally found; yet neither followeth it, therefore, that all scholars live uncomfortable lives, because some do so, that are possessed and oppressed with that humour; nor may that rightly be ascribed to study and learning, which not it, but the constitution of some students, produceth.—*Gataker's Joy of the Just.*

With regard to the transposition of words and members out of their natural order, critics have entered into much discussion. It is agreed on all hands, that such transposition or inversion bestows upon a period a very sensible degree of force and elevation; and yet writers seem to be at a loss in what manner to account for this effect. Whether, upon the whole, we have gained or lost by departing from this mode of arrangement, has by some been doubted. It appears to me that the genius of the English language does not naturally admit of much inversion. But, however this may be, such violent instances of transposition as occur in the passages lately quoted, are altogether obsolete; and no modern writer could adopt them without the censure of harshness and affectation.

Among those who first laid aside the frequent inversions which prevailed among writers of the former

age, we may reckon Cowley and Clarendon. The writings of Temple also contributed much to advance the language to its present state: but to those of Dryden, it is chiefly indebted for its smoothness and elegance. Dryden began to write about the time of the Restoration, and continued long in his literary career. He brought to the study of his native tongue a vigorous mind fraught with various knowledge. There is a richness in his diction, a copiousness, ease, and variety in his expression, which have never been surpassed by any one of those who have come after him. His clauses are never balanced, nor his periods modelled; every word seems to drop by chance, though it falls into its proper place. Nothing is cold, or languid; the whole is airy, animated, and vigorous; what is little, is gay; what is great, is splendid. Though all is easy, nothing is feeble; though all seems careless, there is nothing harsh; and though since the publication of his works, more than a century has elapsed, yet they have nothing uncouth or obsolete.*

Some are of opinion that it is elegance rather than strength, which forms the chief characteristic of modern English authors. They maintain that, since the close of the last century, few specimens have been exhibited of energetic composition, and that purity and elegance have been studied, to the neglect of strength and vigour. This charge seems to be unsupported by facts. What writer ever expressed himself with greater energy than Johnson? Or who ever discovered any want of this quality in the compositions of Hawkesworth, Robertson, and Stuart? From the catalogue of living authors, several great names might also be selected.

* Johnson's life of Dryden.

Vigour is sometimes confounded with harshness: it is imagined that a writer cannot be energetic, without being rugged. "They would not have it run without rubs, as if that style were more strong and manly, that struck the ear with a kind of unevenness."*

Those who complain that, with regard to energy of expression, no writer of the present age can be compared with Bacon and Raleigh, ought to impute this circumstance to another cause than the study of purity and elegance. If the foundations of a nervous or weak style be laid in the author's manner of thinking, the matter may readily be explained. Bacon and Raleigh possessed greater genius than those who are brought into competition with them.

I shall now endeavour to select some instances of the vigorous style; though the general character of a writer cannot be collected from detached passages.

About this time Warburton began to make his appearance in the first ranks of learning. He was a man of vigorous faculties, a mind fervid and vehement, supplied by incessant and unlimited inquiry, with wonderful extent and variety of knowledge, which yet had not oppressed his imagination, nor clouded his perspicacity. To every work he brought a memory full fraught, together with a fancy fertile of original combinations, and at once exerted the powers of the scholar, the reasoner, and the wit. But his knowledge was too multifarious to be always exact, and his pursuits too eager to be always cautious. His abilities gave him a haughty confidence, which he disdained to conceal or mollify; and his impatience of opposition disposed him to treat his adversaries with such contemptuous superiority as made his readers commonly his enemies, and excited against the advocate the wishes of some who favoured the cause. He seems to have adopted the Roman emperor's determination, *oderint dum metuant*; he used no allurements of gentle language,

* Johnson's Discoveries.

but wished to compel rather than persuade. His style is copious without selection, and forcible without neatness; he took the words that presented themselves; his diction is coarse and impure, and his sentences are unmeasured.—*Johnson's Life of Pope.*

From the writings of this author a more admirable specimen might be selected; but I have chosen this, on account of its reference to our present subject.

Christianity was more calculated, than the superstitions of paganism, to impress the imagination and the heart. The rite of baptism taught the follower of Odin to transfer his worship to Christ. To defend Christianity with his sword and his life, became a sacred vow, to which every knight was ambitious to submit. He considered himself as a saint, as well as a hero; and on the foundation of his piety, the successors of St. Peter were to precipitate the armies of Europe upon Asia, and to commence the crusades, those memorable monuments of superstition and heroism. The lady not less than the knight, was to feel the influence of this religion. Society was to be disturbed with the sublime extravagance of fanatics, who were to court perfections out of the order of nature. Mortifications, austerities, and penances, were to be meritorious in proportion to their duration and cruelty. The powers and affections of the mind and the heart were to sicken and to languish in frivolous and fatiguing ceremonials. The eye of beauty was to sadden in monasteries and in solitude, or to light the unholy fires of a rampant priesthood. The deity was to be worshipped in abjectness and in terror, as if he contemned the works he had made, and took delight in human dejection and wretchedness.

[*Stuart's View of Society.*

It is with justice that Mr. Hayley distinguishes Dr. Stuart as an author possessed of "all the energy of genius." His style though certainly deficient in fluency, is bold and vigorous; and upon some occasions he even rises to uncommon eloquence. The English language can boast of few such finished works as his admirable *View of Society in Europe*. The subject is

interesting and important; and he has applied himself to the investigation of it with great assiduity and research.

Wherever they marched, their route was marked with blood. They ravaged or destroyed all around them. They made no distinction between what was sacred and what was profane.— They respected no age, or sex, or rank. What escaped the fury of the first inundation, perished in those which followed it. The most fertile and populous provinces were converted into deserts, in which were scattered the ruins of villages and cities, that afforded shelter to a few miserable inhabitants whom chance had preserved, or the sword of the enemy, wearied with destroying, had spared. The conquerors who first settled in the countries which they had wasted, were expelled or exterminated by new invaders, who, coming from regions farther removed from the civilized parts of the world, were still more fierce and rapacious. This brought new calamities upon mankind, which did not cease until the north, by pouring forth successive swarms, was drained of people, and could no longer furnish instruments of destruction. Famine and pestilence, which always march in the train of war, when it ravages with such inconsiderate cruelty, raged in every part of Europe, and completed its sufferings.—*Robertson's View of Society.*

The style of Dr. Robertson is at once polished and energetic. It seems to approach the very borders of perfection. The objections which have been urged against it by a popular writer, it may here be proper to consider. "The historian of Charles the fifth," it is remarked, "possesses so many excellences, that it is almost sacrilegious to detract from his merit. But no writer is perfect; and I doubt not, from the opinion I entertain of his taste and candour, that he will confess, when the ardour of composition is abated, that his style has deviated from the historical to the declamatory. He relates the councils as well as the wars of nations, with all the vehemence of a Demosthenes,

and the rapid eloquence of a Ciceronian Philippic. The style is glowing and animated in a high degree; but does nature dictate that a long and diffuse dissertation on such subjects as the feudal state, or on others equally dispassionate in themselves, should be treated in a style which would become an orator in the act of rousing his sluggish countrymen to repel an invader? I will not enter into an inquiry, whether such long dissertations legitimately belong to history or to another species of composition. I believe they might more properly be classed under the name of political dissertations. They find no place in the purer models of antiquity; and the reader has certainly a right to complain that they occupy a disproportionate part of a work, and appear in the place of facts, on which he might make his own reflections. But the fire and *vis viva*, or the life and spirit which are diffused over this respectable writer's page, induces us to forget a while the rules prescribed by the frigidity of criticism. What though he seems to have made Demosthenes his model, instead of Livy or Herodotus, yet surely, what bears any resemblance to the spirit of that noble Athenian, cannot fail to delight and improve."

These observations seem to be dictated by the spirit of cold and systematic criticism. Why is the historian to be debarred from relating the councils of nations with a vehement and rapid eloquence? The councils of nations may be more interesting than their wars, and ought therefore to be related in an interesting manner. It is upon their issue that war or peace depends; and they tend to exhibit the characteristic features not only of distinguished personages, but of a whole people. It is asked if nature dictates that a long and diffuse dissertation on such subjects as the

the feudal state, or on others equally dispassionate in themselves, should be treated in a style which would become an orator in the act of rousing his sluggish countrymen to repel an invader? This question may be answered in the negative. And it will be difficult to prove that, in the dissertation alluded to, the style of Robertson corresponds to the above description.— It is neither too lofty nor too mean. The feudal state cannot with propriety be termed a dispassionate subject: it presents the human mind in a great variety of singular and interesting aspects, and affords an eloquent writer many opportunities of exerting his powers. Whether such dissertations find a place among the models of antiquity, is of little importance in the determination of the present question. That they have only been attempted by the moderns, is a circumstance which tends to show the progressive improvement of every thing connected with the intellectual faculties of man. It is absurd to propose the ancient historians as permanent models: in many respects, they are greatly excelled by the moderns. The modern historian exhibits a more complete and masterly view of “the progress of the human mind, the gradual improvement of reason, the successive advances of science, the vicissitudes of learning and ignorance, which are the light and darkness of thinking beings, the extinction and resuscitation of arts, and the revolutions of the intellectual world.”*

* As an opportunity has thus presented itself, I shall take the liberty of mentioning some authors who have either treated of the study of history, or of the manner in which it should be written. Remarks upon this subject occur in the writings of Dionysius, Lucian, and Diodorus, Vossius, Hubertus Foliet, Riccoboni, Patrici, and Mascardi, have professedly treated of the historical art. The reader may also consult *St. Real De*

That beautiful dissertation which appeared so tedious to the learned writer, will by most readers be perused with a lively interest; and it is surprising that any critic should regard it with coldness. Inquiries into the nature and progress of society are certainly much more important than narrations of battles and sieges, negotiations and intrigues. The disquisitions of Ferguson, Robertson, and Stuart, may be classed with the most masterly productions in the English language. In Dr. Ferguson's work, even Mr. Gray acknowledged "uncommon strains of eloquence."*

The style of Mr. Gibbon has sometimes been preferred to that of Dr. Robertson; but this is certainly an honour to which it is not justly entitled. It evinces less correctness, less compression, and less of the genuine Attic taste. It abounds with affected circumlocutions, and with epithets which have the appearance of being introduced for the sake of the sound, rather than of the sense. Yet, with all this want of chasteness, it displays so many of the flowers of a classical fancy, that it is very far from being entitled to the contempt which it has sometimes experienced.

If it be necessary to produce any instance of the feeble style, the following may, I think, be selected with sufficient propriety.

To read such vast numbers as he did, he latterly made use of a method as extraordinary as any thing I have hitherto mention-

P Usage de l'Histoire, Condillac De l'Etude de l'Histoire, Argenson's Reflexions sur les Historiens Francois, inserted in Choix des Memoires de l'Academie Royale, tome iii. Hayley's Essay on History, Bolingbroke's Letters on the Study of History, and Ferriar's Menippean Essay on English Historians. Each of these authors cannot be recommended as highly excellent; but each of them may be perused with some advantage.

* Mason's Memoirs of Gray, sect. iv.

ed of him. When a book first came into his hands, he would *look the title page all over, then dip here and there* in the preface, dedication, and advertisements, if there were any; *and then cast his eyes on each of the divisions, the different sections, or chapters, and then he would be able for ever to know what that book contained:* for he remembered as steadily as he conceived rapidly.

It was after he had *taken to this way of fore-shortening* his reading, if I may be allowed so odd an expression; *and I think I rather may*, because he conceived the matter almost as completely in this short way, as if he had read it at full length; that a priest, who had composed a panegyric on one of his favourite saints, brought it to Magliabechi, as a present. He had read it over the way above mentioned; only the title page, and the heads of the chapters; *and then* thanked him very kindly for his excellent treatise. The author, in some pain, asked him, "Whether that was all he intended to read of his book?" Magliabechi coolly answered, "Yes; for I know very well every thing that is in it." My author for this anecdote endeavoured to account for it in the following manner: Magliabechi, says he, knew all that *the writers before* had said of this saint; he knew this particular father's turn and character; and from thence judged, what he would chuse out of them, and what he would omit.—*Spence's Life of Magliabechi.*

This passage seems to exhibit every possible fault. The sentences are constructed in a very unskilful manner; the circumstances are often improperly placed; and the members loose and disjointed. Nothing is expressed with energy; all is feeble and ungraceful. The commencement of the second paragraph presents so violent a separation of correspondent words, that the period is involved in a considerable degree of obscurity. Nor is the author's phraseology less exceptionable: it is altogether low and vulgar, as the expressions in Italics will sufficiently testify.

CHAPTER XXI.

Of the Vehement Style.

THE vehement rises a degree above the nervous style. The former, however, always includes the latter: for in order to attain to any vehemence of diction, an author must necessarily be possessed of strength.

The vehement style is distinguished by a peculiar ardour of expression: it is the language of a man whose imagination and passions are strongly affected by the subject which he contemplates; and who is therefore negligent of lesser graces, but pours forth his eloquence with the fulness and rapidity of a torrent. It belongs to the higher species of oratory; and indeed is rather expected from a man who declaims in a popular assembly, than from one who writes in the retirement of his closet. Of this style, the most striking examples in our language, have been exhibited by Burke and Bolingbroke.

Mr. Burke was a man of the most splendid talents, and those talents had been improved by due cultivation. His imagination was fervent and brilliant; but his judgment was less vigorous than his imagination. In modern, and indeed in ancient times, the copiousness and force of his eloquence have not often been paralleled: it rolls along like a rapid and impetuous torrent, and bears down every object that rises in opposition. His illustrations are variegated and striking; he is even profuse of poetical conceptions and poetical imagery. His metaphors, however, are not unfrequently coarse, and his language is deficient in

purity and selection. When he has begun to descant on a subject which interests his morbid feelings, he knows not when to pass to another. Upon the whole, it may perhaps be affirmed with safety, that his various productions are more calculated to excite the astonishment or indignation of his contemporaries, than to secure the applause or imitation of posterity.

Lord Bolingbroke was fitted by nature to be the demagogue of a popular assembly. The style which runs through all his political writings, is that of a person declaiming with heat, rather than writing with deliberation. He abounds with rhetorical figures; and pours himself forth with great impetuosity. He is copious to a fault; places the same thought before us in many different views; but generally with vivacity or ardour. He is bold rather than correct. His eloquence is a torrent that flows strong, but often muddy. His merit as a writer would have been considerable, if his matter had equalled his style. But while we find much to commend in the latter, the former is entitled to no kind of praise. In his reasonings, he is for the most part flimsy and false; in his political writings, factious; and, in what he calls his philosophical ones, irreligious and sophistical in the highest degree.*

* Lord Chesterfield having mentioned Bolingbroke's *Idea of a Patriot King*, proceeds in the following manner: "I desire that you will read it over and over again, with particular attention to the style, and to all those beauties of oratory with which it is adorned. Till I read that book, I confess I did not know all the extent and powers of the English language. Lord Bolingbroke has both a tongue and a pen to persuade; his manner of speaking in private conversation is full as elegant as his writings; whatever subject he either writes or speaks upon, he adorns with the most splendid eloquence; not a studied or laboured eloquence, but such a flowing happiness of diction,

In treating of the vehement style, I have not, as upon former occasions, attempted to select examples. The subject cannot in the present instance be elucidated in this manner: vehemence of style can only be perceived and relished by attending to a pretty long series of reasonings and illustrations.

CHAPTER XXII.

Of the Plain Style.

A PLAIN style is one that rejects all ambitious ornaments. The writer who adopts this manner, may perhaps endeavour to display his meaning with perspicuity and precision: qualities of style which, it must be confessed, are of the highest-order. His composition may also be possessed of force and vivacity. But he will show an indifference for what is merely ornamental. He does not strive to captivate the fancy or the ear by employing rhetorical figures, or musical arrangement. Yet it is not necessary that he disgust his reader by a dryness or harshness of manner. A plain style is consistent with smoothness of arrangement, and a temperate use of metaphor; though neither of these is absolutely requisite.

which (from care perhaps at first) is become so habitual to him, that even his most familiar conversations, if taken down in writing, would bear the press, without the least correction, either as to method or style. If his conduct in the former part of his life, had been equal to his natural and acquired talents, he would most justly have merited the epithet of all-accomplished."—*Letters to his Son, Let. clxxv.*

In discussions of a philosophical nature, the plain style ought to predominate. And, accordingly, many of the English philosophers have employed it with propriety. Even in works which admit, or require much ornament, there are parts where the plain manner should be adopted. But it must be remembered, that when this is the character which a writer affects throughout his whole composition, great weight of matter, and great force of sentiment, are required to secure the reader's attention. Unless he happen to treat of mathematical subjects, an author ought always to beware of falling into a dryness of manner. This excludes ornaments of every description. Content with being understood, it has not the least aim to please either the fancy or the ear. Aristotle furnishes the most complete example of a dry style. Never, perhaps, was there an author who adhered so rigidly to the strictness of a didactic manner throughout all his writings, and conveyed so much instruction without the least approach to ornament. With the most profound genius, and the most extensive views, he writes like a pure intelligence, who addresses himself solely to the understanding, without making any use of the channel of the imagination. But this is a manner which deserves not to be imitated. For although the value of the matter may compensate for the dryness or harshness of the style, yet is that dryness a considerable defect: it fatigues the attention, and conveys our sentiments with disadvantage to the reader or hearer.

It would appear, however, that Aristotle wrote in this manner from choice rather than necessity. Had he preferred a more ornamental style, he could undoubtedly have attained it. It is even the opinion of

some learned men, that, if we may judge from the specimen which still remains,* he was fitted by nature to excel in the higher species of poetry. Scaliger regards his *Hymn to Virtue* as not inferior to the composition of Pindar.†

- Dr. Swift may be placed at the head of those who have employed the plain style. Few writers have discovered greater talents. He always shows himself completely master of the subject of which he treats. Few were better acquainted with the extent, the purity, the precision of the English language: and therefore, to those who are ambitious of attaining a pure and correct style, he is one of the most useful models. But we must not look for much ornament or grace in his language. His haughty and morose genius made him despise any embellishment of that kind as beneath his dignity. He delivers his sentiments in a plain, positive manner, like one who is sure he is always right, and is very indifferent whether his reader be pleased or not. His sentences are often negligently arranged: the sense is sufficiently obvious; but little regard is paid to compactness or elegance. If a metaphor, or any other figure, chanced to render his satire more poignant, he would perhaps condescend to adopt it, when it presented itself; but if it tended only to embellish or illustrate, he would rather throw it aside. Hence in his serious writings, his style often borders upon the dry and unpleasing. But in his humorous pieces, the plainness of his manner displays his wit to the greatest advantage.

* Apud Athenæum, lib. xv. cap. xvi. Stobæum, prope init, et Diogenem Laertium in Vita Aristotelis.

† Scaligeri Poeticæ, lib. i. cap. xlv.

Dr. Johnson has commented on the style and manner of Swift with his usual powers of discrimination. "In his works," says he, "he has given very different specimens both of sentiment and expressions. His 'Tale of a Tub' has little resemblance to his other pieces. It exhibits a vehemence and rapidity of mind, a copiousness of images, and vivacity of diction, such as he afterwards never possessed, or never exerted. It is of a mode so distinct and peculiar, that it must be considered by itself; what is true of that, is not true of any thing else which he has written.

"In his other works is found an equable tenour of easy language, which rather trickles than flows. His delight was in simplicity. That he has in his works no metaphor, as has been said, is not true; but his few metaphors seem to be received rather by necessity than choice. He studied purity; and though perhaps all his strictures are not exact, yet it is not often that solecisms can be found; and whoever depends on his authority, may generally conclude himself safe. His sentences are never too much dilated or contracted; and it will not be easy to find any embarrassment in the complication of his clauses, any inconsequence in his connexions, or abruptness in his transitions.

"His style was well suited to his thoughts, which are never subtilized by nice distinctions, decorated by sparkling conceits, elevated by ambitious sentences, or variegated by far-sought learning. He pays no court to the passions; he excites neither surprize nor admiration; he always understands himself; and his readers always understand him: the peruser of Swift wants little previous knowledge; it will be sufficient that he is acquainted with common words and common things; he is neither required to mount elevations, nor to ex-

plore profundities; his passage is always on a level, along solid ground, without asperities, without obstruction.

"This easy and safe conveyance of meaning, it was Swift's desire to attain; and for having attained it, he deserves praise, though perhaps not the highest praise. For purposes merely didactic, when something is to be told that was not known before, it is the best mode; but against that inattention by which known truths are suffered to lie neglected, it makes no provision; it instructs, but does not persuade."*

It will now be proper to select a passage, characteristic of that species of style of which we have been treating. And for this purpose we shall have recourse to the writings of Swift.

I suppose it will be granted that hardly one in an hundred among our people of quality, or gentry, appears to act by any principle of religion. That great numbers of them do entirely discard it, and are ready to own their disbelief of all revelation in ordinary discourse. Nor is the case much better among the vulgar, especially in great towns; where the profaneness and ignorance of handicraftsmen, small traders, servants, and the like, are to a degree very hard to be imagined greater. Then it is observed abroad, than no race of mortals hath so little sense of religion as the English Soldiers: to confirm which, I have been often told by great officers in the army, that in the whole compass of their acquaintance, they could not recollect three of their profession, who seemed to regard or believe one syllable of the Gospel: and the same, at least, may be affirmed of the fleet. The consequences of all which, upon the actions of men, are equally manifest. They never go about, as in former times, to hide or palliate their vices; but expose them freely to view, like any other common occurrences of life, without the least reproach from the world or themselves. For instance, any man will tell you, he intends to be drunk this evening, or

* Johnson's Life of Swift.

was so last night, with as little ceremony or scruple, as he would tell you the time of the day. He will let you know that he is going to a wench, with as much indifference as he would a piece of public news. He will swear, curse, or blaspheme, without the least passion or provocation. And although all regard for reputation be not quite laid aside in the other sex; it is, however, at so low an ebb, that very few among them seem to think virtue and conduct of any necessity for preserving it. If this be not so, how comes it to pass that women of tainted reputations find the same countenance and reception in all public places, with those of the nicest virtue, who pay and receive visits from them, without any manner of scruple?—Which proceeding, as it is not very old among us, so I take it to be of most pernicious consequence. It looks like a sort of compounding between Virtue and Vice; as if a woman were allowed to be vicious, provided she be not profligate; as if there was a certain point where gallantry ends, and infamy begins; or that an hundred criminal amours were not as pardonable as half a score.—*Swift on the Advancement of Religion.*

CHAPTER XXIII.

Of the Neat Style.

NEATNESS of style implies a certain degree of ornament. Its ornaments, however, are not of the most showy or brilliant kind: they are such as are easily attained. A writer who employs this kind of style, considers the beauties of language as an object worthy of attention. He is careful in the choice of his words, and endeavours to arrange them with propriety and elegance; but he seldom attempts any bold flight of eloquence. His sentences are free from the incumbrances of superfluous words: they are of a moderate

length, and rather inclining to brevity than to a swelling structure; they generally close with propriety and are unincumbered with *long tails*. His cadences varied, but not of the studied musical kind. Such figures as he employs, are short and correct, rather than bold or glowing.

This style may, perhaps, be adopted by an author of superior genius; but it is not unattainable by one of no uncommon capacity. Any writer of ordinary attainments may acquire it, by carefully attending to the laws of rhetoric, and to the practice of writers of established reputation. It is a mode of writing that never becomes disagreeable. It imprints a character of moderate elevation on our composition, and displays a decent degree of ornament, which is not incompatible with any subject whatever. A familiar letter, or a law paper, may be written with neatness; and a sermon, or philosophical treatise, in a neat style, will be read with pleasure.

The writings of Middleton, Berkley, Blackstone, and Smith, appear to me to exhibit models of this species of style. From the last of these authors I shall endeavour to select an apposite passage.

We sympathize even with the dead, and overlooking what is of real importance in their situation, that awful futurity which awaits them; we are chiefly affected by those circumstances which strike our senses, but can have no influence upon their happiness. It is miserable, we think, to be deprived of the light of the sun; to be shut out from life and conversation; to be laid in the cold grave a prey to corruption and the reptiles of the earth; to be no more thought of in this world, but to be obliterated in a little time from the affections and almost from the memory of their dearest friends and relations. Surely, we imagine, we can never feel too much for those who have suffered so dreadful a calamity. The tribute of our fellow feelings seems doubly due to them now when they are in danger of

being forgot by every body; and, by the vain honours which we pay to their memory, we endeavour, for our own misery, artificially to keep alive our melancholy remembrance of their misfortune. That our sympathy can afford them no consolation, seems to be an addition to their calamity; and to think that all we can do is unavailing, and that, what alleviates all other distress, the regret, the love, and the lamentations of their friends, can yield no comfort to them, serves only to exasperate the sense of their misery. The happiness of the dead, however, most assuredly is affected by none of these circumstances; nor is it the thought of these things which can ever disturb the profound security of their repose. The idea of that dreary and endless melancholy which the fancy naturally ascribes to their condition, arises altogether from our joining to the change which has been produced upon them, our own consciousness of that change, from our putting ourselves in their situation, and from our lodging, if I may be allowed to say so, our own living souls in their inanimated bodies, and thence conceiving what would be our emotions in this case. It is from this very illusion of the imagination, that the foresight of our own dissolution is so terrible to us, and that the idea of those circumstances, which undoubtedly can give us no pain when we are dead, makes us miserable while we are alive.—*Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments.*

CHAPTER XXIV.

Of the Graceful Style.

NOTWITHSTANDING the powerful effect which graceful composition produces upon the mind, it is difficult to reduce it to a definition. Where language does not supply us with proper words to express the ideas of the mind, we can only convey our sentiments in figu-

rative terms; a defect which necessarily introduces some obscurity.

Grace in writing may be compared to that easy air which so remarkably distinguishes persons of a genteel and liberal cast. It consists not only in the particular beauty of single parts, but in the general symmetry and construction of the whole. An author may be just in his sentiments, lively in his figures, and clear in his expression; yet at the same time may be wholly a stranger to graceful composition. The several members of a discourse must be so agreeably united as mutually to reflect beauty upon each other: their arrangement must be so happily disposed as not to admit of the least interposition without manifest prejudice to the entire piece. The thoughts, the metaphors, the allusions, and the diction, should appear easy and natural, and seem to arise like so many spontaneous productions, rather than as the effects of art or labour.

Whatever, therefore, is forced or affected in the sentiments, whatever pompous or pedantic in the expression, is the very reverse of grace. Her mien is neither that of a prude, nor that of a coquette: she is regular without formality, and sprightly without being fantastical. Grace is to good writing, what a proper light is to a fine picture; it not only shows all the figures in their several proportions and relations, but shows them in the most advantageous manner.

As gentility appears in the most minute actions, and improves the most inconsiderable gesture, so grace is discovered in the placing even of a single word, or in the turn of a mere expletive. Nor is this inexpressible quality confined to one species of composition: it extends from the humble pastoral to the lofty epic; from the slightest letter, to the most solemn discourse.

It is supposed that Sir William Temple was the first writer who introduced a graceful manner into English prose.* I am rather inclined to think that this honour is due to Cowley. The general merit of this author's essays has been acknowledged by Johnson† and Goldsmith;‡ but they have never been referred to as instances of graceful composition. They however seem entitled to this mark of distinction. His sentiments are natural, and his diction simple and unaffected. Nothing appears far-fetched, or artificially constructed; and our ears are seldom or never assailed with pompous and pedantic expressions.

But wherever we may look for the origin of this quality, it is certainly to be found in its highest perfection in the compositions of Mr. Addison, an author whose writings will be distinguished as long as politeness and good sense find any admirers. That becoming air which Cicero esteems the criterion of fine writing, and which every reader, he says, imagines so easy to be imitated, yet will find so difficult to attain, is the prevailing characteristic of all this excellent author's performances. We may justly apply to him what Plato, in his allegorical language, says of Aristophanes; the Graces, having searched all the world round for a temple in which they might for ever dwell, settled at last in the breast of Addison.

His style is thus characterized by Dr. Johnson: "His prose is the model of the middle style; on grave subjects not formal, on light occasions not groveling; pure without scrupulosity and exact without elaboration; always equable, and always easy, without glowing

* Melmoth's Letters of Fitzosborne, Let. xxix.

† Johnson's Life of Cowley.

‡ Goldsmith's Essays, vol. iii. Essay xx.

words, or pointed sentences. Addison never deviates from his track to snatch a grace; he seeks no ambitious ornaments, and tries no hazardous innovations. His page is always luminous, but never blazes in unexpected splendour.

"It was apparently his principal endeavour to avoid all harshness and severity of diction; he is therefore sometimes verbose in his transitions and connections, and sometimes descends too much to the language of conversation; yet if his language had been less idiomatical, it might have lost somewhat of its genuine Anglicism. What he attempted he performed: he is never rapid, and he never stagnates. His sentences have neither studied amplitude, nor affected brevity; his periods, though not diligently rounded, are voluble and easy."*

Dryden, Pope, and Atterbury, are reckoned among the number of graceful writers; and to these we may likewise add the names of Melmoth and Hume.

As a polite writer, Mr. Hume perhaps appears to the greatest advantage in some of his essays.† His

* Johnson's *Life of Addison*.

† Dr. Aikin, speaking of the style of philosophical writings, makes the following observations: "Great precision in the use of words, clear arrangement of all the members of a sentence, closeness of method, strength and conciseness of expression, without harshness or obscurity, are essential to perfection in this department of writing; and if somewhat of the grace and amenity of language be added, which is not incompatible with the other requisites, the effect of conviction may be promoted, by leading on the reader pleasantly through a topic perhaps naturally dry and unalluring. I conceive Cicero and Hume to be examples of this union of every useful and agreeable quality in discussions purely philosophical.—*Letters to his Son*, vol. ii. Lett. iv.

style is often possessed of uncommon grace and suavity. It must however be acknowledged, that he too frequently adopts French idioms; a fault which was undoubtedly owing to his long residence on the continent. But from whatever cause it may have originated, it certainly detracts from his merit as a writer.

The prose compositions of Dr. Beattie are often distinguished by a degree of chaste ornament, not unworthy of the author of *The Minstrel*; they are indeed distinguished by uncommon grace and elegance. His epistolary correspondence, interspersed in the late Sir William Forbes's Account of his Life and Writings, evinces a peculiar felicity of style. Mr. Cowper, in one of his letters, mentions him in terms of the warmest commendation. "I thanked you in my last for Johnson, I now thank you with more emphasis for Beattie, the most agreeable and amiable writer I ever met with; the only author I have seen whose critical and philosophical researches are diversified and embellished by a poetical imagination, that makes even the driest subject, and the leanest, a feast for an epicure in books. He is so much at his ease too, that his own character appears in every page, and, which is very rare, we see not only the writer, but the man; and that man so gentle, so well tempered, so happy in his religion, and so humane in his philosophy, that it is necessary to love him if one has any sense of what is lovely."*

In the writings of Mr. Harris, I own myself unable to perceive those Platonic graces for which they have been so highly extolled by Dr. Knox.† His style seems for the most part, to be quite the reverse of graceful.

* Hayley's Life of Cowper, vol. ii. p. 192.

† Knox's Essays, No. cxxvi.

His combination of words, is often harsh and disagreeable; and on many occasions he employs Greek rather than English idioms.

In exhibiting an example of the graceful style, I shall have recourse to the works of Mr. Melmoth.

I consider a generous mind as the noblest work of the creation, and am persuaded, wherever it resides, no real merit can be wanting. It is, perhaps, the most singular of all the moral endowments. I am sure at least, it is often imputed where it cannot justly be claimed. The meanest self-love, under some refined disguise, frequently passes upon common observers for this god-like principle; and I have known many a popular action attributed to this motive, when it flowed from no higher a source than the suggestions of concealed vanity. Good-nature, as it hath many features in common with this virtue, is usually mistaken for it: the former, however, is but the effect, possibly, of a happy disposition of the animal structure, or, as Dryden somewhere calls it, of a certain "milkeness of blood;" whereas the latter is seated in the mind, and can never subsist where good sense and enlarged sentiments have no existence. It is entirely founded, indeed, upon justness of thought, which, perhaps, is the reason this virtue is so little the characteristic of mankind in general. A man whose mind is warped by the selfish passions, or contracted by the narrow prejudices of sects or parties, if he does not want honesty, must undoubtedly want understanding. The same clouds that darken his intellectual views, obstruct his moral ones; and his generosity is extremely circumscribed, because his reason is exceedingly limited.—True generosity rises above the ordinary rules of social conduct, and flows with much too full a stream to be comprehended within the precise marks of formal precepts. It is a vigorous principle in the soul, which opens and expands all her virtues far beyond those which are only the forced and unnatural productions of a timid obedience. The man who is influenced singly by motives of the latter kind, aims no higher than at certain authoritative standards; without even attempting to reach those glorious elevations, which constitute the only true heroism of the social character. Religion, without this sovereign principle, degenerates

into a slavish fear, and wisdom into a specious cunning; learning is but the avarice of the mind, and wit its more pleasing kind of madness. In a word, generosity sanctifies every passion, and adds grace to every acquisition of the soul; and if it does not necessarily include, at least it reflects a lustre upon the whole circle of moral and intellectual qualities.—*Melmoth's Letters of Fitzosborne.*

CHAPTER XXV.

Of the Florid Style.

QUINTILIAN regards it as a favourable presage in juvenile writers, that their compositions display a redundancy of fancy.* We must, however, beware of mistaking pomp of expression for luxuriance of imagination. The former is of easy access, but the latter is more rarely to be found. It is in the power of every one to load his style with high-sounding words and phrases; but to embellish a discourse with the glowing colours of fancy, requires the aid of inventive genius.

* “Audeat hæc ætas plura, et inveniatur, et inventis gaudeat, sint licet illa non satis interim sicca et severa. Facile remedium est ubertatis; sterilia nullo labore vincuntur. Illa mihi in pueris natura minimum spei dabit, in qua ingenium iudicio præsumitur. Materiam esse primum volo vel abundantiorē, atque ultra quam oporteat fusam. Multum inde decoquent anni, multum ratio limabit, aliquid velut usu ipso deteretur, sit modo unde excidi possit, et quod exculpi; erit autem, si non ab initio tenuem nimium laminam duxerimus et quam cælatura altior rumpat. Quod me de his ætatibus sentire minus mirabitur, qui apud Ciceronem legerit. *Volo enim se efferat in adolescente facunditas.*”—QUINTILIAN, *de Institut. Orator. lib. ii. cap. iv.*

A certain degree of chaste ornament can never be unseasonable; though gaudy and meretricious ornaments are always disgusting. The over florid style, therefore, cannot be agreeable to a reader of taste. Although it may be allowed to youth in their first essays, it must not receive the same indulgence when employed by writers of maturer years. We may reasonably expect, that judgment, as it ripens, should chasten imagination, and reject as juvenile all such ornaments as are redundant or unsuitable. Nothing can be more contemptible than that tinsel splendour of language which some writers perpetually affect. It were well if this could be ascribed to the overflowings of a rich imagination; for, in that case, we should at least find something to amuse our fancy, if we found nothing to instruct our understanding. But it is luxuri-
riancy of words, not of thought, that is exhibited by these frothy writers. We see a laboured attempt to rise to a splendour of composition, of which they have formed some kind of loose idea. But not possessing sufficient strength of genius to attain the desired object, they endeavour to supply the defect by the use of poetical words, cold exclamations, and common-place figures. While they are so solicitous about every thing which has the appearance of pomp and magnificence, it has escaped these writers that sobriety in ornament is one great secret for rendering it pleasing; and that without a foundation of good sense and solid thought, the most florid style is but a childish imposition on the public. The public, however, are but too apt to be imposed on in this manner. I cannot help thinking, that it reflects more honour on the religious and benevolent disposition of the present age, than on the refinement of its taste, that the works of Mr. Hervey

have been so generally admired. The pious and benevolent heart which is always displayed in them, and the lively fancy which appears on some occasions, justly merit applause: but the perpetual glitter of expression, the swoln imagery, and strained description, with which they abound, are ornaments of a false kind. The following passages may be produced as a specimen.

It was early in a summer morning, when the air was cool, the earth moist, the whole face of the creation fresh and gay. The noisy world was scarce awake. Business had not quite shook off his sound sleep, and Riot had but just reclined his giddy head. All was serene; all was still; every thing tended to inspire tranquillity of mind, and invite to serious thought.—Only the wakeful lark had left her nest, and was mounting on high, to salute the opening day. Elevated in air, she seemed to call the laborious husbandman to his toil, and her fellow songsters to their notes.—Earliest of birds, said I, companion of the dawn, may I always rise at thy voice! rise to offer the matin-song, and adore that beneficent Being, “who maketh the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice.”—How charming to rove abroad, at this sweet hour of prime! to enjoy the calm of nature, to tread the dewy lawns, and taste the unruffled freshness of the air!—The greyness of the dawn decays gradually. Abundance of ruddy streaks tinge the fleeces of the firmament; ’till, at length, the dappled aspect of the East is lost in one ardent and boundless blush.—Is it the surmise of imagination, or do the skies really redden with shame, to see so many supinely stretched on their drowsy pillows.—*Hervey’s Reflections on a Flower Garden.*

This passage is rendered ridiculous by being unnecessarily loaded with the tritest epithets of poetry. All the writings of this author are nearly in the same strain.

There is a certain degree of elevation to which prose may be permitted to rise. Its elevation, however,

must not be perpetual; when the writer affects unvaried magnificence, it is probable that his reader will at length be seized with satiety. Ornament loses its effect when every page is crowded with embellishments.

In the following beautiful passage we discover none of those improprieties which appear in that quoted above. It discovers an elevation of sentiment, free from all puerility of language.

There is a kind of voice that speaks through the universe. The language of nature is that of delight; and even the parts incapable of admitting this delight, have yet the means of imparting it. Behold the sun! the lustre which it spreads, and the beauties which it enables you to discover, kindle your admiration. The Indian views it with rapture. He feels gratitude for its bounty. He addresses the god of fire with hymns of praise, and songs of triumph. But in vain should he attempt to make that sun share his gratifications. The orb of day is uninfluenced by his expressions of adoration. It heeds no protestations; it feels no emotions; but that orb administers to the comfort of the devotee, and conveys animation and cheerfulness to millions.—The structure of the heavens manifests such design and wisdom, that some of the ancient philosophers supposed man born only to view and admire them. The bounty displayed in this earth, equals the grandeur conspicuous in the heavens. There is no region in which the volume of instruction is not unfolded. In every climate is found proper food for the support of the inhabitants, and proper medicines for the removal of their diseases. And should every age even change its food, and its diseases, there would still be found in the world, supplies sufficient for the inhabitants. So bountiful and provident is nature! The distribution of oceans, seas, and rivers; the variety of fields, meadows, and groves; the luxuriance of fruits, herbs, and flowers; the return of spring, summer, autumn, and winter, not only regular in their approaches, but bringing with them presents, to make their return desirable; the pleasant vicissitudes of day and night; all have a voice, which, by telling man he is constantly receiving favours, reminds him he should be ready to bestow them.—*Dyer's Dissertation on Benevolence.*

This passage expresses elevated notions in elevated language. It does not, like the one lately quoted, contain any thing ridiculous or disgusting. *The orb of day* is the only expression which approaches to puerility; but it is evidently introduced for the sake of avoiding repetition.

There is one department of writing in which the florid style may be employed with propriety; I mean the oriental tale. This species of composition possesses many charms, when finished with a masterly hand; and accordingly it has always been very popular from the time of its introduction into Europe. In France, it was at one time cultivated with particular attention; though the oriental tales which obtained a currency in that country, had often very little to recommend them.

Ensuite vinrent de Syrie
Volumes de contes sans fin,
Ou 'lon avoit mis a dessein
L'oriental allegorie.
Les enigmes et le genie
Du Talmudiste, et du Rabbin,
Et ce bon gout de leur patrie,
Qui, loin de perdre en chemin,
Parut, sortant de chez Barbin,
Plus Arabe qu'en Arabie. *Hamilton.*

English literature can boast of several beautiful compositions of this kind. It will be sufficient to mention Johnson's *Rasselas*, Hawkesworth's *Almorán and Hamet*, and Langhorne's *Solyman and Alméná*, together with the various tales which occur in the *Spectator*, *Rambler*, and *Adventurer*.

Although the oriental tale admits of the florid style, yet every page must not be highly ornamented. The mind is apt to be dazzled by too much splendour: and where all is magnificent, we become sick of admiration.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Of the Simple and the Affected Style.

SIMPLICITY, applied to writing, is a term very frequently used; but, like other critical terms, it is often used in a very loose and vague manner. This circumstance has chiefly arisen from the variety of meanings attached to the word. It will therefore be necessary to distinguish these different significations; and to show in what sense the term is properly applicable to style. We may remark four different acceptations in which it is taken.

The first is simplicity of composition, as opposed to a great variety of parts. This is the simplicity of plan in dramatic or epic poetry, as distinguished from double plots and crowded incidents. Thus we term the plan of Home's *Douglas* simple, and that of Dryden's *Spanish Friar* complicated. We speak of the simplicity of Homer's *Iliad*, in opposition to the digressions of Lucan's *Pharsalia*. In this sense, simplicity is the same with unity.

The second sense is simplicity of thought, as opposed to refinement. Simple thoughts are what arise naturally, what the subject or the occasion suggest unsought, and what, when once suggested, are easily apprehended. Refinement in writing expresses a less natural and obvious train of thought, which it requires a peculiar bent of genius to pursue. Thus we say, that Parnell and Goldsmith exhibit greater simplicity of thought than Cowley and Donne: Cicero's thoughts on moral subjects are natural: Seneca's too refined and

far-fetched. In these two senses of simplicity, when it is opposed either to variety of parts, or to refinement of thought, it bears no proper relation to style.

In the third place, simplicity stands opposed to superfluous ornament, or pomp of language. Thus Jortin is termed a simple, and Gibbon a florid writer.

The simple style, in this sense, coincides with the plain or with the neat style, which, as it has already been treated of, requires no farther illustration.

There is also another signification attached to the term simplicity. This does not refer to the degree of ornament employed, so much as to the easy and natural manner in which our language expresses our thoughts. In this sense, simplicity is compatible with the highest ornament. It stands opposed, not to ornament, but to affectation. Thus Homer possesses this kind of simplicity in the greatest perfection; and yet no poet has more ornament and beauty.

A graceful simplicity of style seems to be of easy attainment; though in practice the matter is found to be quite otherwise.* It does not appear difficult to catch the manner of Xenophon, or Addison; yet who has ever imitated either of them with success?

A writer of simplicity expresses himself in a manner which every one thinks easy to be attained. There are no marks of art in his expression; it seems the very language of nature: you see in the style, not the writer and his labour, but the man in his own natural character. He may be rich in his expression; he may avail himself of the beauties of figurative language;

* "*Itaque eum qui audiunt,*" says Cicero, "*quamvis ipsi infantes sint, tamen illo modo confidunt se posse dicere. Nam orationis subtilitas imitabilis quidem illa videtur esse existimanti, sed nihil est experienti minus.*"—*Orator.*

still, however, every thing seems to flow from him without effort; and he appears to write in this manner, not because he has studied it, but because it is most natural to him. Yet it must not be imagined that a style of this kind is to be attained without study. To conceal its own efforts, is said to be the perfection of art; and when we find an author's style characterized by a beautiful simplicity, we may conclude that this is the effect of natural ingenuity, aided by an assiduous attention to the rules of composition. Reading an author of simplicity, is like maintaining familiar conversation with a person of distinction, who lays open his sentiments without affectation or disguise. But a mode of writing which seems artificial and elaborate, has always this disadvantage, that it exhibits an author in form, like a man at court, where the splendour of dress, and the ceremonial of behaviour, conceal those peculiarities which distinguish one person from another.

The ancients are more remarkable for simplicity than the moderns. The reason is obvious. The former wrote from the dictates of natural genius, and did not endeavour to model their own compositions according to those of others. When an author attempts this, he is always in danger of deviating into affectation. The more early Greek writers had no proper models to imitate; and, accordingly, they surpass those of every other learned nation in point of beautiful simplicity. This quality is highly conspicuous in the writings of Homer, Hesiod, Anacreon, Theocritus, Herodotus, and Xenophon. Rome can also boast of several writers of this description; particularly Terence, Lucretius, and Cæsar.

In the catalogue of English authors, there are several distinguished for a becoming simplicity of man-

net. Although Dr. Tillotson cannot be recommended as an elegant and polished writer, yet his style is remarkably simple and unaffected. It has already been observed that he has no pretensions to genuine eloquence, if that term be understood to include vehemence and strength of expression, the beauties of figurative language, and the correct and harmonious arrangement of sentences. His real merit, however, must not be overlooked. A constant vein of piety and good sense runs through all his works. His manner is earnest and serious; and so much useful instruction is conveyed in a natural style, that his works can never be suffered to fall into disrepute. They will be held in estimation as long as the English language is understood; not, indeed, as models of eloquence, but as the productions of an amiable writer, whose manner is strongly expressive of his innate goodness of heart. "There is," says Goldsmith, "nothing peculiar to the language of Archbishop Tillotson, but his manner of writing is inimitable; for one who reads him, wonders why he himself did not think and speak in that very manner. The turn of his periods is agreeable, though artless; and every thing he says seems to flow spontaneously from inward conviction."*

Sir William Temple is also remarkable for simplicity of style. In point of ornament and correctness, he rises a degree above Tillotson; though for the latter quality he is by no means remarkable. His language is chiefly distinguished by its smoothness and amenity. He not unfrequently becomes prolix and careless; yet he seldom fatigues the attention of his reader. No writer whatever has stamped upon his

* Goldsmith's *Essays*, vol. iii. Essay xx.

style a more lively impression of his own character. In reading his works, we seem engaged in conversation with him; we become thoroughly acquainted with him, not merely as an author but as a man. With an author of this character, we contract a kind of friendship.

It has been confidently asserted that Temple was a man of no learning. Those who entertain this opinion, ought to bestow a second perusal upon his works; which certainly indicate that their author was not deficient either in scholastic attainments, or in knowledge of the world. He seems to have been competently skilled in the polite languages both of ancient and modern times, and to have possessed a general knowledge in the different departments of elegant literature. Perhaps he was not much versed in science; though it is not to be presumed that he was unacquainted with its most important branches. In proof of these assertions, I need only refer to his essays on poetry, on heroic virtue, and on ancient and modern learning.

Of the more correct and ornamented degree of the simple manner, Mr. Addison undoubtedly exhibits the most perfect example. In figurative language, he is extremely rich; particularly in similes and metaphors; which are so employed as to render his style splendid without being gaudy. There is not the least affectation in his manner; we see no marks of labour, nothing forced or constrained. Great elegance is every where joined with great ease and simplicity. He is in particular distinguished by a character of modesty and politeness, which appears in all his writings. No author has a more popular and insinuating manner. His works are also recommended by the great regard which he constantly shows for virtue and religion.

The literary merit of Mr. Goldsmith* seems to bear some analogy to that of Mr. Addison. His diction is correct and elegant, and at the same time free from every species of affectation. His language flows from him without perceptible effort; yet it is always such as it would be difficult to improve. The classical ease of his manner has seldom been equalled. He has exerted his talents upon a great variety of subjects; and on whatever subject he happens to write, he is always read with pleasure. His *Essays*, *Life of Parnell*, *Citizen of the World*, and *Vicar of Wakefield*, are compositions sufficient to have established his reputation as a writer. His celebrity, however, does not solely depend upon these productions; it is also supported by the conspicuous merit of his dramatic and poetical works. Dr. Johnson has very justly characterized Goldsmith as "a man of such variety of powers, and such felicity of performance, that he always seemed to do best that which he was doing; a man who had the art of being minute without tediousness, and general without confusion; whose language was copious without exuberance, exact without constraint, and easy without weakness."†

Sterne is generally mentioned as a writer of great simplicity of style: but he does not appear worthy of being classed under the present head. His simplicity is not of the most graceful and elegant character. Yet his works do undoubtedly furnish examples of a style at once simple and ornamented. In support of this assertion, I shall venture to produce the following

* Goldsmith, who is commonly styled Doctor, never obtained any higher degree than that of Bachelor of Physic.

† Johnson's *Life of Parnell*.

passage; which, though not altogether faultless, seems highly beautiful.

Maria, though not tall, was nevertheless of the first order of fine forms. Affliction had touch'd her looks with something that was scarce earthly. Still she was feminine; and so much was there about her of all that the heart wishes, or the eye looks for in woman, that, could the traces be ever worn out of her brain, and those of Eliza out of mine, she should not only eat of my bread, and drink of my cup, but Maria should lie in my bosom, and be unto me as a daughter.—Adieu, poor luckless maiden! imbibe the oil and wine which the compassion of a stranger, as he journeyeth on his way, now pours into thy wounds. The being who has twice bruised thee, can only bind them up for ever.—*Sterne's Sentimental Journey.*

It is to be lamented that this author should ever have employed his talents in recommending a system of refined libertinism. It is also to be lamented that he who could so exquisitely delineate the pleasures of general benevolence, should have been found notoriously deficient in the common duties of humanity. In the preface to his *Sermons*, he wishes to persuade his reader that they rather flow from the heart than from the head. If this is the case, they must be sorry productions; for his heart was hard and unfeeling. "What is called sentimental writing," says the Earl of Orford, "though it be understood to appeal solely to the heart, may be the product of a bad one. One would imagine that Sterne had been a man of a very tender heart—yet I know, from indubitable authority, that his mother, who kept a school, having run in debt on account of an extravagant daughter, would have rotted in jail, if the parents of her scholars had not raised a subscription for her. Her son had too much sentiment to have any feeling. A dead ass was more important to him than a living mother."* Yet this is

* Walpoliana, vol. i.

the man who inculcates the principles of universal philanthropy; the man who pretends to extend his benevolent views to the happiness of the very fly that accident may expose to the rude hand of violence.

That Sterne possessed the power of moving the passions, must certainly be admitted; the episodes of *Le Fevre* and *Maria* are eminently pathetic. But it may be disputed whether he possessed all that wit and humour for which the courtesy of some readers has given him credit. If obscenity be wit, and quaint obscurity humour, he is infinitely superior to *Butler* and *Cervantes*. But if it should appear that obscenity is within the reach of the poorest pretender to genius, and that to plunge into the depth of obscurity, requires nothing more than a confused brain, Sterne will no longer be regarded as a writer of the greatest originality.*

The most illustrious example which has lately been exhibited of a noble simplicity of style, occurs in the historical production of *Charles James Fox*, of immortal memory. His composition is so deeply impressed with all the distinguishing qualities of an exalted and generous mind, that no ingenuous reader can peruse it without catching some portion of his spirit. If he occasionally employs a word or phrase which may be considered as somewhat homely or familiar, it is undoubtedly to be attributed to his anxiety to avoid every appearance of pomp and affectation; and it is to be hoped that so conspicuous a model may have a strong tendency to counteract the seductive examples of *Johnson* and *Gibbon*. He uniformly displays a genuine English style; and his thoughts support themselves by

* See Dr. Ferriar's Illustrations of Sterne.

their intrinsic dignity. It cannot be sufficiently regretted that Mr. Fox did not live to complete the plan which he had so happily formed: but his work, even in its present state, will ever remain a noble monument of his genius and patriotism. Hume evinces great acuteness, but Fox evinces great wisdom.

Of an author who has rendered his style much less beautiful by want of simplicity, I cannot point out a more remarkable instance than Lord Shaftesbury. It has already been hinted that he is a writer in whom some beauties are blended with many deformities. His language is rich and musical: but he seems to have considered it as beneath the dignity of one of his rank, to speak like the rest of mankind. Hence he is ever in buskins: and arrayed in pomp and magnificence. In every sentence we discern evident marks of art and labour. We perceive nothing of that ease which accompanies the expression of a sentiment proceeding warm from the heart. In the use of figures and ornament of every description, he shows sufficient skill; but his fondness for them is too visible. Having once found a metaphor which pleases his fancy, he knows not how to lay it aside; but often pursues it until it becomes quite disgusting and ridiculous. What appears very surprising, Shaftesbury was a professed admirer of simplicity. He is always extolling it in the ancients, and at the same time censuring the moderns for their affectation, and *rawness of fancy*. He possessed a false refinement of taste, without any warmth of passion, or vivacity of feeling. The coldness of his character led him to that artificial and stately manner which appears in all his writings. He seems highly fond of wit and raillery: which he attempts to promote, but with very little success. His wit is always blunt, and his raillery stiff and awkward.

Dr. Berkeley has justly ridiculed this pretended rival of Plato, for his affectation and self-importance. In one of his dialogues, a speaker produces the book entitled *Advice to an Author*, and reads a brilliant passage from it in a declamatory tone, adjusting all the pauses as if he had been reciting a poem in blank verse. After he has finished his declamation, the dialogue proceeds in the following manner: "Euphranor, having heard thus far, cried out: What! will you never have done with your poetry? another time may serve: but why should we break off our conference to read a play? You are mistaken; it is no play nor poetry, replied Alciphon, but a famous modern critic moralizing in prose. You must know this great man hath (to use his own words) revealed a grand arcanum to the world, having instructed mankind in what he calls mirrour-writing, self-discoursing practice, and shew'd, 'That by virtue of an intimate recess, we may discover a certain duplicity of soul, and divide ourself into two parties, or (as he varies the phrase) practically form the dual number.' In consequence whereof, he has found that a man may argue with himself: and not only with himself, but also with notions, sentiments, and vices; which by a marvellous prosopopœia he converts into so many ladies; and so converted, he confutes and confounds them in a divine strain. Can any thing be finer, bolder, or more sublime? EUPH. It is very wonderful. I thought indeed you had been reading a tragedy. Is this he who despiseth our universities, and sets up for reforming the style and taste of the age? ALC. The very same. This is the admired critic of our times. Nothing can stand the test of his correct judgment, which is equally severe to poets and parsons."*

* Berkley's Minute Philosopher, Dialogue v.

The philosophy of Lord Shaftesbury, as well as his style, has found its admirers. His writings, if we may safely rely on Dr. Hutcheson, will be esteemed while any reflection remains among men.* There is some probability, however, that this prediction will not be verified.

From the account which has been given of Shaftesbury's manner, it may easily be imagined that he would mislead those who blindly admired him. We have one remarkable exemplification in Dr. Blackwell of Aberdeen, an author well known for his *Life of Homer*,† *Letters on Mythology*, and *Memoirs of the Court of Augustus*. He discovers ingenuity and learning; but is infected with an extravagant love of the artificial style, and of that parade of language which distinguishes the Shaftesburean manner.

Beside those general characters of style which have already been pointed out, several others might perhaps be mentioned. Conceited writers, for instance, discover their spirits so much in their composition, that it imprints on their style a character of pertness; though I confess it is difficult to determine whether this can be classed among the attributes of style, or is rather to be ascribed entirely to the thought. But to whatever class we refer it, all appearances of it ought to be avoided with care, as a most disgusting blemish in writing.

• From the observations which have been suggested, it may be inferred that to determine among all these different manners of writing, which is positively preferable; is neither easy nor necessary. Style is a field

* Hutcheson's *Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, Preface.

† See Dr. Wharton's *Essay on Pope*, vol. i. p. 129.

that admits of great latitude. Its qualities in different authors may be very different, and yet in them all beautiful. Room must be left here for genius; for that particular determination which every one receives from nature to one manner of expression more than another. Some general qualities indeed there are of such importance, that they should always, in every kind of composition, be kept in view; and some defects, which we should always study to avoid. An ostentatious, a feeble, a harsh, or an obscure style, for example, can never be adopted with propriety; and perspicuity, strength, neatness, and simplicity, are beauties which ought always to be studied. But with regard to the mixture of all, or the degree of predominancy to be allowed to any one of those qualities, in forming our peculiarly distinctive manner, no precise rules can be given; nor shall I venture to point out any one model as absolutely perfect.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Critical Examination of a Passage in the Writings of Addison.

HAVING insisted fully on the nature of style, I shall now descend to a critical analysis of particular passages in the writings of eminent authors. An analysis of this kind will tend further to illustrate the subject; as it will suggest observations which I have not yet had occasion to make, and will show in the most practical light, the use of those which I have made. In

the prosecution of this plan, I shall use all possible brevity; as the mind cannot long dwell with pleasure upon minute objects.

"As a perfect tragedy is the noblest production of human nature, so it is capable of giving the mind one of the most delightful and most improving entertainments."

This is an excellent introductory sentence. It is clear, precise, and simple. The first period of a discourse ought always to be of a moderate length. The mode, however, in which the participle *giving* is here employed, does not possess much dignity. *Affording* might perhaps be substituted with propriety. The different tenses of the verb *give* are often used in a manner which approaches to the colloquial or familiar style. "The Anacreontiques therefore of Cowley," says Dr. Johnson, "*give* now all the pleasure which they ever *gave*."

"A virtuous man, says Seneca, struggling with misfortune, is such a spectacle as gods might look upon with pleasure; and such a pleasure it is which one meets with in the representation of a well written tragedy."

The first member of this sentence is harsh and disagreeable. "Such a spectacle as gods might *behold* with pleasure," seems more harmonious.

My present business is not with the author's sentiments: it may not, however, be improper to observe, that what he advances in the sentence now quoted, can only apply to those tragedies of which the chief personages are virtuous.

"Diversions of this kind wear out of our thoughts every thing that is mean and little."

The word *diversions* cannot, without manifest impropriety, be taken to signify the more solemn amusements of the theatre. "*Diversion*," says Dr. Johnson,

"seems to be something lighter than *amusement*, and less forcible than *pleasure*." It has nearly the same signification with *sport*. The tragical sports of the theatre, is a strange expression.

"They cherish and cultivate that humanity which is the ornament of our nature."

This metaphorical language is exceptionable. The act of cherishing, and the act of cultivating, bear no kind of analogy to each other; and therefore ought not to have been so intimately connected. The subject of the former must be possess of animal life; that of the latter must be inert matter. With what propriety then can the same object be represented as cherished and cultivated?

"They soften insolence, sooth affliction, and subdue the mind to the dispensations of Providence."

This sentence is smooth and elegant.

"It is no wonder, therefore, that in all the polite nations of the world, this part of the drama has met with public encouragement."

This sentence requires no particular consideration.

"The modern tragedy excels that of Greece and Rome, in the intricacy and disposition of the fable; but, what a Christian writer should be ashamed to own, falls infinitely short of it in the moral part of the performance."

It was formerly observed that in the members of a sentence where two objects are either compared or contrasted, some resemblance in the language and construction should be preserved. This rule is violated in the above passage. A slight alteration will, in my opinion, improve the sentence: "The modern tragedy excels that of Greece and Rome, in the intricacy and disposition of the fable; but, what a Christian writer

should be ashamed to own, falls infinitely short of it in the purity and beauty of the morality."

"This I may shew more at large hereafter; and in the mean time, that I may contribute something towards the improvement of the English tragedy, I shall take notice, in this and the following papers, of some particular parts in it that seem liable to exception."

This period is arranged with clearness and perspicuity. Although in the former part of it, *that* is employed as a conjunction, yet it afterwards occurs as a relative pronoun. Of this word Mr. Addison seems to have been remarkably fond.—*Which* is more definite in its signification than *that*, being never employed in any other way than as a relative; whereas *that* is a word of various senses; sometimes a demonstrative pronoun, often a conjunction. In some cases we are, indeed, obliged to use *that* for a relative, in order to avoid the ungraceful repetition of *which* in the same sentence. But when we are under no necessity of this kind, *which* is generally the preferable word. The following remarks on this subject occur in one of Mr. Cowper's letters. "Upon solemn occasions, as in prayer or preaching, for instance, I would be strictly correct; and upon stately ones, for instance, were I writing an epic poem, I would be so likewise; but not upon familiar occasions. God *who* heareth prayer, is right. Hector *who* saw Patrocles, is right. And the man *that* dresses me every day, is in my mind right also; because the contrary would give an air of stiffness and pedantry to an expression that in respect of the matter of it cannot be too negligently made up."*

"Aristotle observes that the Iambic verse in the Greek tongue was the most proper for tragedy; because at the same time that

* Hayley's Life of Cowper, vol. ii. p. 314.

it lifted up the discourse from prose, it was that which approached nearer to it than any other kind of verse."

This sentence contains a great superfluity of words. The author's meaning may be expressed in the following manner: "Aristotle observes that the Iambic verse in the Greek tongue was the most proper for tragedy; because, while it elevated the discourse a degree above prose, it approached nearer to it than any other kind of verse."

"For," says he, "we may observe that men in ordinary discourse very often speak iambics without taking notice of it. We may make the same observation of our English blank verse, which often enters into our common discourse, though we do not attend to it, and is such a due medium between rhyme and prose, that it seems wonderfully adapted to tragedy."

In these sentences we shall find little to commend. *Taking notice of it*, is a feeble and ungraceful close, which might have been easily avoided. In the other period, the words *which often comes into our common discourse, though we do not attend to it*, are altogether superfluous. They are nothing more than the repetition of a circumstance of which we are sufficiently apprized by the application of the remark quoted in the former sentence.

"I am therefore very much offended when I see a play in rhyme; which is as absurd in English, as a tragedy of hexameters would have been in Greek or Latin."

This is a neat period.

"The solecism is, I think, still greater in those plays that have some scenes in rhyme and some in blank verse, which are to be looked upon as two several languages; or where we see some particular similes dignified with rhyme, at the same time that every thing about them lies in blank verse. I would not however debar the poet from concluding his tragedy, or, if he pleases, every act of it, with two or three couplets, which may have

the same effect as an air in the Italian opera after a long *recitativo*, and gives the actor a graceful *exit*."

In the former of these sentences, the phrase *every thing about them lies in blank verse*, appears liable to exception: in the latter, the two concluding members are not properly counterbalanced: the last is of such disproportionate length, that the harmony is in a great measure destroyed.

"Besides, that we see a diversity of numbers in some parts of the old tragedy, in order to hinder the ear from being tired with the same continued modulation of voice."

The conjunction *that* is introduced without any propriety. By the insertion of it, this sentence, instead of seeming complete, has rather the appearance of a detached member. Why, in the present instance, *old* should have been preferred to *ancient*, it is not easy to discover.

"For the same reason, I do not dislike the speeches in our English tragedy that close with an *hemistich*, or half verse, notwithstanding the person who speaks after it begins a new verse, without filling up the preceding one; nor with abrupt pauses and breakings-off in the middle of a verse, when they humour any passion that is expressed by it."

This sentence is devoid of correctness and elegance. *To speak after an hemistich*, is certainly a very uncouth expression. The latter part of the period has a kind of mutilated appearance. One would be led to suspect that *I am not displeased with*, had formerly occupied the place of *I do not dislike*; and that when the author made the correction, he forgot to adjust the whole of the sentence. "For the same reason, I am not displeased with the speeches in our English tragedy, &c. nor with abrupt pauses and breakings-off in the middle of a verse," &c. It would perhaps have increased

the smoothness of the period, without detracting from its significance, had it been permitted to close at the word *passion*.

"Since I am upon this subject, I must observe that our English poets have succeeded much better in the style than in the sentiments of their tragedies."

Since I am upon this subject, I must observe that.—These words, introduced without any apparent necessity, occasion a slight ambiguity. While they seem to refer to what was stated in the last sentence, they in fact refer to the general subject of which the author is treating.

"Their language is very often noble and sonorous, but the sense, either very trifling or very common."

This sentence is perhaps capable of being improved: "Their language is often noble and sonorous, while the sense is either very trifling or very common."

"On the contrary, in the ancient tragedies, and indeed in those of Corneille and Racine, though the expressions are very great, it is the thought that bears them up and swells them. For my own part, I prefer a noble sentiment that is depressed with homely language, infinitely before a vulgar one that is blown up with all the sound and energy of expression."

Great is an epithet which no other critical writer, so far as I remember, has ever applied to expressions. The metaphorical language which occurs at the conclusion of this passage, is somewhat ludicrous. An object may be blown up with wind, but never with sound.

"Whether this defect in our tragedies may arise from want of genius, knowledge, or experience in the writers, or from their compliance with the vitious taste of their readers, who are better judges of the language than of the sentiments, and consequently relish the one more than the other, I cannot determine. But I believe it might rectify the conduct both of the

more particularly, where he slackens his efforts, and eases the style of those epithets and metaphors, in which he so much abounds. What can be more natural, more soft, or more passionate, than that line in Statira's speech, where she describes the charms of Alexander's conversation?

"Then he would talk—Good gods! how he would talk!"

The author has here expressed his sentiments with felicity. The language is correct and polished; and though abounding in metaphor, it is free from affectation or impropriety.

"That unexpected break in the line, and turning the description of his manner of talking, into an admiration of it, is inexpressibly beautiful, and wonderfully suited to that fond character of the person that speaks it."

As the words *wonderfully suited* occur in a sentence not far distant from this, they ought not to have been so soon repeated. The period might have closed thus: "and finely adapted to the fond character of the person by whom it is uttered." This arrangement would remove the intrusive particle *it* from the honourable situation which it now maintains.

"There is a simplicity in the words, which outshines the utmost pride of expression."

This sentence possesses considerable beauty.

"Otway has followed nature in the language of his tragedy, and therefore shines in the passionate parts, more than any of our English poets."

The verb *shines* is placed too near its compound *outshines*.

"As there is something familiar and domestic in the fable of his tragedy, more than in those of any other poet, he has little pomp, but great force in his expressions. For which reason, though he has admirably succeeded in the tender and melting part of his tragedies, he sometimes falls into too great a familiarity of phrase in those parts, which, by Aristotle's rule, ought to have been raised and supported by the dignity of expression."

Of the four sentences last quoted, three conclude with the substantive *expression*, either in its singular or its plural form.

"It has been observed by others, that this poet has founded his tragedy of *Venice Preserved* on so wrong a plot, that the greatest characters in it are those of rebels and traitors."

The word *character*, when applied in this manner, denotes some person, together with the assemblage of his qualities. It is improper to say, "The greatest persons are the persons of rebels and traitors;" an expression to which that contained in the conclusion of the above passage is equivalent. The words *those of*, should have been omitted.

"Had the hero of his play discovered the same good qualities in the defence of his country, that he showed for its ruin and subversion, the audience could not enough pity and admire him; but as he is now represented, we can only say of him, what the Roman historian says of Cataline, that his fall would have been glorious (*si pro patria sic concidisset*) had he so fallen in the service of his country."*

This, though an agreeable sentence, is not free from faults. The author speaks of the good qualities which the hero of *Venice Preserved* shows for the ruin of his country. This is certainly an attempt in which good qualities were never exhibited. In this passage the words *ruin* and *subversion* are both used, though they do not serve to mark any different shades in the idea.

* Spectator, No. 39.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Critical Examination of a Passage in the Writings of Swift.

"THE players having now almost done with the comedy called the *Beggar's Opera*, for the season; it may be no unpleasant speculation, to reflect a little upon this dramatic piece, so singular in the subject and manner, so much an original, and which hath frequently given so very agreeable an entertainment."

This introductory sentence is not entitled to much commendation. *The players having now almost done with the comedy*, is a phrase not altogether free from vulgarity.

"Although an evil taste be very apt to prevail, both here and in London; yet there is a point which whoever can rightly touch, will never fail of pleasing a very great majority; so great, that the dislikers out of dullness or affectation, will be silent, and forced to fall in with the herd; the point I mean is what we call humour; which, in its perfection, is allowed to be much preferable to wit; if it be not rather the most useful and agreeable species of it."

This sentence, though sufficiently perspicuous, is certainly devoid of elegance. *There is a point which whoever can rightly touch*, is uncouth phraseology.

"I agree with Sir William Temple, that the word is peculiar to our English tongue; but I differ from him in opinion, that the thing itself is peculiar to the English nation; because the contrary may be found in many Spanish, Italian, and French productions; and particularly, whoever hath a taste for true humour, will find an hundred instances of it, in those volumes printed in France under the name of *Le Theatre Italien*; to say nothing of Rabelais, Cervantes, and many others."

The word to which the author refers in the beginning

of this sentence, is *humour*: though, as he had mentioned *wit* at the close of the last, a slight degree of ambiguity is occasioned. It would be more perspicuous to say "The word humour is peculiar to *our* English tongue." In this clause, *the* seems more proper than *our*. This sentence is but unskilfully constructed. The member by which it is closed, follows with a very halting pace. I shall venture to suggest a few alterations: "I agree with Sir William Temple that the word humour is peculiar to the English Tongue; but I differ from him in the opinion, that the quality which it denotes, is peculiar to the English nation. We find abundant proofs of the contrary in many Spanish, Italian, and French productions. Whoever hath a taste for true humour, will find an hundred instances of it, in those volumes printed in France under the title of *Le Theatre Italien*."

"Now I take the comedy or farce, (or whatever name the critics will allow it) called the *Beggar's Opera*, to excel in this article of humour; and upon that merit to have met with such prodigious success, both here and in England."

This sentence is very deficient in elegance.

"As to poetry, eloquence, and music, which are said to have most power over the minds of men; it is certain, that very few have a taste or judgment of the excellences of the two former; and if a man succeed in either, it is upon the authority of those few judges, that lend their taste to the bulk of readers, who have none of their own. I am told, there are as few good judges in music; and that among those who crowd the Operas, nine in ten go thither merely out of curiosity, fashion, or affectation."

This paragraph suggests no material observation.

"But a taste for humour is in some measure affixed to the very nature of man, and generally obvious to the vulgar, except upon subjects too refined, and superior to their understanding."

A taste for humour is obvious to the vulgar, is a very inaccurate expression. It is humour itself that is obvious to the vulgar, not a taste for humour.

"And as this taste for humour is purely natural, so is humour itself; neither is it a talent confined to men of wit or learning; for we observe it sometimes among common servants, and the meanest of the people, while the very owners are often ignorant of the gift they possess."

By *humour itself*, the author must mean the exertions of the natural talent of humour: but in the next clause he confounds the talent with its exertions. *The owners of a talent*, is an expression by no means elegant.

"I know very well, that this happy talent is contemptibly treated by critics, under the name of low humour, or low comedy; but I know likewise, that the Spaniards and Italians, who are allowed to have the most wit of any nations in Europe, do most excel in it, and do most esteem it."

Still the author discovers a want of precision in his ideas. A talent for humour can never with any propriety be termed *low comedy*.

"By what disposition of the mind, what influence of the stars, or what situation of the climate, this endowment is bestowed upon mankind, may be a question fit for philosophers to discuss. It is certainly the best ingredient towards that kind of satire, which is most useful, and gives the least offence; which, instead of lashing, laughs men out of their follies and vices; and is the character that gives Horace the preference to Juvenal."

The first of these sentences is unexceptionable, but the last cannot be commended.—*It is certainly the best ingredient towards that kind of satire*. Here the preposition *towards* is used with little propriety; either *in* or *of* would be preferable. The period ought to have closed with the word *vices*: the next clause forms a complete sentence. "It is the possession of this talent that gives Horace the preference to Juvenal."

"And although some things are too serious, solemn, or sacred to be turned into ridicule, yet the abuses of them are certainly not; since it is allowed that corruptions in religion, politics, and law, may be proper topics for this kind of satyr."

"There are two ends that men propose in writing satyr: one of them less noble than the other, as regarding nothing farther than the private satisfaction and pleasure of the writer; but without any view towards personal malice; the other is a public spirit, prompting men of genius and virtue, to mend the world as far as they are able."

Public spirit is not an *end* which men propose in writing satire; it is one of the *motives* which impel them, to have recourse to that weapon.

"And as both these ends are innocent, so the latter is highly commendable. With regard to the former, I demand whether I have not as good a title to laugh, as men have to be ridiculous; and to expose vice, as another has to be vicious. If I ridicule the follies and corruptions of a court, a ministry, or a senate, are they not amply paid by pensions, titles, and power; while I expect and desire no other reward than that of laughing with a few friends in a corner? Yet, if those who take offence, think me in the wrong, I am ready to change the scene with them whenever they please."

These sentences are entitled to praise. The expression is pointed and the arrangement accurate.

"But, if my design be to make mankind better, then I think it is my duty: at least I am sure it is the interest of those very courts and ministers, whose follies or vices I ridicule, to reward my good intentions: for if it be reckoned a high point of wisdom to get the laughers on our side, it is much more easy, as well as wise, to get those on our side, who can make millions laugh when they please.

"My reason for mentioning courts, and ministers (whom I never think on, but with the most profound veneration) is because an opinion obtains, that in the *Beggar's Opera*, there appears to be some reflection upon courtiers and statesmen, whereof I am by no means a judge."

One would suppose that, in the last of these periods, the author intends to say, that he was no judge of courtiers and statesmen: whereas his real meaning must be, that he cannot judge concerning the circumstance of this opera's containing reflections upon those personages. The period might be improved thus: "An opinion obtains, that in the *Beggar's Opera*, there appears to be some reflection upon courtiers, and statesmen; a circumstance of which I am by no means a judge.

"It is true, indeed, that Mr. Gay, the author of this piece, hath been somewhat singular in the course of his fortunes; for it hath happened, that after fourteen years attending the court, with a large stock of real merit, a modest and agreeable conversation, a hundred promises, and five hundred friends, hath failed of preferment; and upon a very weighty reason."

After fourteen years attending the court. It is more proper to say *after fourteen year's attendance at court, or, after attending the court for fourteen years.*—By a typographical error, the pronoun *he* seems to have been omitted before the words *hath failed.*—*Upon a weighty reason* is an unusual expression. We commonly say, *for a weighty reason.*

"He lay under the suspicion of having written a libel or lampoon against a great minister. It is true, that great minister was demonstratively convinced, and publicly owned his conviction, That Mr. Gay was not the author; but having lain under the suspicion, it seemed very just that he should suffer the punishment; because in this most reformed age, the virtues of a prime minister are no more to be suspected than the chastity of Caesar's wife."

The last sentence is somewhat ambiguous. The construction might leave room to suppose that the prime minister had lain under suspicion of having written a libel or lampoon against himself. The ambiguity may

easily be removed: "But *this poet* having lain under the suspicion."

"It must be allowed that the Beggar's Opera is not the first of Mr. Gay's works, wherein he hath been faulty with regard to courtiers and statesmen. For to omit his other pieces, even in his Fables, published within two years past, and dedicated to the duke of Cumberland, for which he was *promised* a reward, he hath been thought somewhat too bold upon the courtiers."

The latter of these sentences is rendered harsh and clumsy by the concourse of so many circumstances; *published within two years past—dedicated to the duke of Cumberland—for which he was promised a reward.*

"And although it be highly probable, he meant only the courtiers of former times, yet he acted unwarily, by not considering, that the malignity of some people might misinterpret what he said to the disadvantage of present persons and affairs."

The contrast contained in this sentence would be more emphatically exprest in the following manner: "And although it be highly probable he meant only *the courtiers of former times*, yet he acted unwarily, by not considering that the malignity of some people might misinterpret what he said, to the disadvantage of *those of the present times.*"

"But I have now done with Mr. Gay as a politician; and shall consider him henceforward only as author of the *Beggar's Opera*, wherein he hath by a turn of humour, entirely new, placed vices of all kinds in the strongest and most odious light: and thereby done eminent service both to religion and morality."

The position of the adverb *only* leaves us uncertain whether it be intended to qualify what precedes or what follows. Better thus: "But I have now done with Mr. Gay as a politician; and henceforward shall only consider him as author of the *Beggar's Opera.*"

Here the sentence might very properly have been closed; and the succeeding one might have commenced thus: "In this performance he hath by a turn of humour," &c.

"This appears from the unparalleled success he hath met with. All ranks, parties, and denominations of men either crowding to see his Opera, or reading it with delight in their closets: even ministers of state, whom he is supposed to have most offended (next to those whom the actors represent) appearing frequently at the theatre, from a consciousness of their own innocence, and to convince the world how unjust a parallel malice, envy, and dissatisfaction to the government have made."

At the beginning of this quotation the pronoun *this* refers not to any particular word that has formerly occurred, but to the general tenor of the foregoing sentence. This practice is not consistent with complete accuracy of style. After the words *he hath met with*, there ought only to have been a semicolon; in its present state the succeeding sentence has a mutilated appearance. The corresponding words *ministers of state* and *appearing*, stand at too great distance from each other.

"I am assured that several worthy clergymen in this city, went privately to see the Beggar's Opera represented; and that the fleeing coxcombs in the pit, amused themselves with making discoveries, and spreading the names of those gentlemen round the audience."

This sentence is smooth and correct.

"I shall not pretend to vindicate a clergyman, who would appear openly in his habit at a theatre, with such a vicious crew as might probably stand round him, at such comedies, and profane tragedies, as are often represented. Besides, I know very well, that persons of their function are bound to avoid the appearance of evil, or of giving cause of offence."

The latter of these periods discovers a confusion of ideas. The author speaks of avoiding the appearance of giving cause of offence. Now in the case which is here alluded to, it is only by appearances that offence can be given; it would therefore have been as proper to have spoken of the appearance of the offence.

"But when the lords chancellors, who are keepers of the king's conscience; when judges of the land, whose title is reverend; when ladies, who are bound by the rules of their sex to the strictest decency, appear in the theatre without censure; I cannot understand why a young clergyman, who comes concealed, out of curiosity to see an innocent and moral play, should be so highly condemned; nor do I much approve the rigour of a great prelate, who said, he hoped none of his clergy were there."

In the expression *a young clergyman who comes concealed out of curiosity*, there is some degree of ambiguity. It seems rather to imply that he is concealed out of curiosity, than that he visits the theatre out of curiosity. The following arrangement is more correct: "I cannot understand, why a young clergyman who, out of curiosity, comes concealed to see an innocent and moral play, should be so highly condemned."

"I am glad to hear there are no weightier objections against that reverend body planted in this city, and I wish there never may. But I should be very sorry, that any of them should be so weak, as to imitate a court-chaplain in England, who preached against the *Beggar's Opera*; which will probably do more good than a thousand sermons of so stupid, so injudicious, and so prostitute a divine."

The metaphor contained in the first of these sentences seems liable to objection. The author speaks of a body *planted* in the city of Dublin. Perhaps the other

period is somewhat deficient in unity. The last clause of it might have formed a separate sentence; "This production will probably do more good," &c.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Critical Examination of a Passage in the Writings of Harris.

"Now the language of these Greeks *was truly like themselves*; 'twas conformable to their transcendent and universal genius. Where matter so abounded, words followed of course, and those exquisite in every kind, as the ideas for which they stood. And hence it followed, there was not a subject to be found, which could not with propriety be exprest in Greek."

The first of these sentences might be improved by the omission of the words printed in *Italic characters*.—Mr. Harris seems to have had a particular affection for contractions. That he should always prefer *'tis* to *it is*, *'twas* to *it was*, *'twere* to *it were*, appears somewhat surprising. This practice certainly cannot increase the smoothness or harmony of his periods. But as the Greek language abounds in contractions, he probably thought that by imitating it in this respect he might contribute to the improvement of his native tongue. To many readers the second sentence will have the appearance of being stiff and quaint. The manner in which the conjunction *as* is there used, is accompanied with some ambiguity. The sense may either be "that the words possess the same degree of exquisiteness with the ideas for which they stood;" or "that the words were exquisite as well as the ideas."

If the latter was the author's meaning, the period may be cleared of all ambiguity by substituting *like* instead of *as*.

"Here were words and numbers for the humour of Aristophanes; for the native elegance of a Philemon or Menander; for the amorous strains of a Minnervus or Sappho; for the rural lays of a Theocritus or Bion; and for the sublime conceptions of a Sophocles or Homer. The same in prose."

Here were is a phrase which perhaps approaches too near vulgar or colloquial language. In other respects the period is elegant and sonorous. The English language does not readily admit of such elliptical phraseology as appears in the latter of these sentences.

"Here Socrates was enabled to display his art, in all the accuracy of periods, and the nice counterpoise of diction. Here Demosthenes found materials for that nervous composition, that manly force of unaffected eloquence, which rushed, like a torrent, too impetuous to be withstood."

This passage is not destitute of beauty. The expressions in the first sentence seem peculiarly happy.

"Who were more different in exhibiting their philosophy, than Xenophon, Plato, and his disciple Aristotle? Different, I say, in their character of composition; for as to their philosophy itself, 'twas in reality the same. Aristotle, strict, methodic, and orderly; subtle in thought; sparing in ornament; with little address to the passions or imagination; but exhibiting the whole with such a pregnant brevity, that in every sentence we seem to read a page."

Different, I say, in their character of composition. This is a very unusual and a very awkward method of beginning a sentence. In constructing the last of these periods, the author seems to have forgotten that he was writing English. Such a construction is foreign to the nature of our language, whatever it may be with regard to those of Greece and Rome. The whole passage discovers marks of affectation.

"How exquisitely is this all performed in Greek!"
 The propriety of this sentence would not be diminished by a slight change in the collocation of the words,
 "How exquisitely is all this performed in Greek!"

"Let those who imagine that it may be done as well in another language, satisfy themselves either by attempting to translate him, or by perusing his translations already made by men of learning. On the contrary, when we read either Xenophon or Plato, nothing of this method and strict order appears. The formal and didactic is wholly dropt."

His translations is an ambiguous phrase: instead of denoting what the sense of the passage requires, it may signify translations executed by Aristotle. *The translations already made*, would have expressed the author's meaning with sufficient accuracy.

"Whatever they may teach, 'tis without professing to be teachers; a train of dialogue and truly polite address, in which, as in a mirror, we behold human life, adorned in all its colours of sentiment and manners."

To render the sense of this passage complete, the reader must, at the beginning of the second clause supply some phrase equivalent to the following:—
 "Their writings exhibit a train," &c. As the sentence now stands, it is loose and disjointed.

"And yet, though these differ in this manner from the Stagite, how different are they likewise in character from each other? Plato, copious, figurative, and majestic; intermixing at times the facetious and satiric; enriching his works with tales and fables, and the mystic theology of ancient times. Xenophon, the pattern of perfect simplicity; every where smooth, harmonious, and pure; declining the figurative, the marvellous, and the mystic; ascending but rarely into the sublime; nor then so much trusting to the colours of style, as to the intrinsic dignity of the sentiment itself."

Of these sentences, the two last are deficient in idiomatic propriety from the omission of the substantive verb. This is a piece of affectation of which Mr. Harris is very frequently guilty.—The word *itself*, which occurs at the close of the last period, is redundant: without contributing to the sense, it tends to injure the sound.

"The language, in the mean time, in which he and Plato wrote, appears to suit so accurately with the style of both, that when we read either of the two, we cannot help thinking, that 'tis he alone who has hit its character, and that it could not have appeared so elegant in any other manner."

This is a very expressive sentence. It is not however unexceptionable: *in the mean time* is in this instance an idle, unmeaning phrase, similar to what many of the Greek particles appear to unenlightened moderns.

"And thus is the Greek tongue, from its propriety and universality, made for all that is great, and all that is beautiful, in every subject, and under every form of writing.

Graius ingenium, Graius dedit ore rotundo
Musa loqui "

A tongue made for all that is great, has no very dignified sound. The sentence might, I think, be improved by substituting *fitted* instead of *made*.

"'Twere to be wished, that those amongst us, who either write or read, with a view to employ their liberal leisure (for as to such as do either from views more sordid, we leave them like slaves to their destined drudgery) 'twere to be wished I say, that the liberal (if they have a relish for letters) would inspect the finished models of Grecian literature; that they would not waste those hours which they cannot recall, upon the meaner productions of the French and English press; upon that fungous growth of novels and pamphlets, where 'tis to be feared, they rarely find any rational pleasure, and more rarely still, any solid enjoyment."

'*Twere to be wished* that the author had constructed this long sentence with a more skilful hand. Instead of arranging it with more luminous propriety, he has had recourse to the expedient of introducing parentheses, and the contemptible little phrase *I say*. The period is thus rendered confused and inartificial. Towards the close of it, however, the cadence is agreeable to the ear.'

"To be competently skilled in ancient learning, is by no means a work of such insuperable pains. The very progress itself is attended with delight, and resembles a journey through some pleasant country. where every mile we advance, new charms arise. 'Tis certainly as easy to be a scholar, as a gamester, or many other characters equally illiberal and low."

The very progress itself—In a phrase of this kind it appears superfluous to use both *very* and *itself*. Either of them would have been sufficient. The cadence of the words *new charms arise*, approaches too nearly to that of poetry. The language of prose and the language of verse ought always to be kept distinct. To this rule some of our writers do not appear to have paid proper attention. In the prose compositions of Lord Shaftesbury and Mr. Hervey, for example, we often find regular and sonorous verses. *It is easy to be a character*, has an uncouth sound. The author might certainly have expressed himself with greater propriety.

"The same application, the same quantity of habit will fit us for one, as completely as for the other. And as to those who tell us with an air of seeming wisdom, that 'tis men and not books we must study to become knowing; this I have always remarked from repeated experience, to be the common consolation and language of dunces."

The second sentence is not altogether correct: the conclusion of it does not bear a proper and legitimate

reference to the beginning. When we meet with the words *as to those who tell us*, we are led to expect that the author's succeeding observation will apply immediately to those persons themselves; whereas it only applies to the language to which they have recourse for consolation. A few alterations may be suggested: "As to the observation which has so frequently been made with an air of seeming wisdom, that it is men, and not books that we ought to study in order to acquire useful knowledge; this I have always remarked from repeated experience to be the common consolation of dunces."

"They shelter their ignorance under a few bright examples, whose transcendant abilities, without the common helps, have been sufficient of themselves to great and important ends. But, alas!

Decipit exemplar vitiis imitabile."

In the expression *abilities sufficient to great and important ends*, there is something awkward. The sentence appears susceptible of improvement: "They shelter their ignorance under the bright example of a few individuals whose transcendant abilities, without the common helps, have been adequate to great and important undertakings."

"In truth, each man's understanding, when ripened and mature, is a composite of natural capacity, and of superinduced habit."

This application of *composite* savours of pedantry: why it is preferred to *composition*, is not altogether obvious; for the latter is certainly a more sonorous word. No other writer, so far as my information serves me, has ever used *composite* as a noun substantive. It is an adjective that is only used in treating of architecture. "Some are of opinion," says Mr. Addison, "that the *composite* pillars of this arch were made in imitation of the pillars of Solomon's temple."

"Hence the greatest men will be necessarily those who possess the best capacities, cultivated with the best habits. Hence, also, moderate capacities, when adorned with valuable science, will far transcend others the most acute by nature, when either neglected, or applied to low and base purposes. And thus for the honour of culture and good learning, they are able to render a man, if he will take the pains, intrinsically more excellent than his natural superior."

And thus for the honour and culture of good learning— This expression appears somewhat antiquated. *If he will take the pains*, is a phrase which may justly be charged with vulgarity.

"And so much at present as to general ideas; how we acquire them; whence they are derived; what is their nature; and what their connection with language. So much, likewise, as to the subject of this treatise, Universal Grammar."*

This is a conclusion truly Grecian. I have sometimes been surprised that Mr. Harris did not commence his treatise in the same antique mode. He might, for example, have begun in this manner: "James Harris wrote the following discourse concerning the principles of universal grammar."†

* Harris's *Hermes*, book iii. chap. v.

† The most ancient philosophical treatise now extant begins nearly in the above manner. "Τὰ δὲ συνεγράψεν Ὀκελλὸς ὁ Λευκαῖος περὶ τῆς τοῦ παντὸς φύσεως.—OCELLUS de *Universa Natura*."

CHAPTER XXX.

Critical Examination of a Passage in the Writings of Robertson.

"WHILE these sentiments prevailed among her subjects, Elizabeth thought she might safely venture to strike the blow which she had so long meditated. She commanded Davidson, one of the secretaries of state, to bring to her the fatal warrant; and her behaviour, on that occasion, plainly shewed that it is not to humanity that we must ascribe her forbearance *hitherto*."

The latter of these sentences, is not constructed with the usual skill of this beautiful writer; the conclusion of it is by no means graceful.

"At the very moment she was subscribing the writ which gave up a woman, a queen, and her own nearest relation, into the hands of the executioner, she was capable of jesting. 'Go,' says she to Davidson, 'and tell Walsingham what I have now done, though I am afraid he will die for grief when he hears it.' Her chief anxiety was how to secure the advantages which would arise from Mary's death, without appearing to have given her consent to a deed so infamous."

In this passage every thing is accurate and luminous.

"She often hinted to Paulet and Drury, as well as to some other courtiers, that now was the time to discover the sincerity of their concern for her safety, and that she expected their zeal would extricate her out of her present perplexity."

The phrase *now was the time* appears to be somewhat deficient in dignity. The author might have expressed himself thus: "She often hinted to Paulet and Drury, as well as to some other courtiers, that an opportunity now occurred for discovering the sincerity of their concern for her safety."

"But they were wise enough to seem not to understand her meaning."

A sentence that must thus include an affirmative and a negative, can never possess much elegance.

"Even after the warrant was signed, she commanded a letter to be written to Paulet, in less ambiguous terms; complaining of his remissness in sparing so long the life of her capital enemy, and begging him to remember at last what was incumbent on him as an affectionate subject, and to deliver his Sovereign from continual fear and danger, by shortening the days of his prisoner, Paulet, though rigorous and harsh, and often brutal in the discharge of what he thought his duty, as Mary's keeper, was nevertheless a man of honour and integrity."

This passage does not seem to require any particular animadversion.

"He rejected the proposal with disdain; and lamenting that he should ever have been deemed capable of acting the part of an assassin, he declared that the queen might dispose of his life at her pleasure; but he would never stain his own honour, nor leave an everlasting mark of infamy on his posterity, by lending his hand to perpetrate so foul a crime."

By lending his hand, is a phrase which appears unsuitable to the dignity of historical composition.

"On the receipt of this answer, Elizabeth became extremely peevish; and calling him a dainty and precise fellow, who would promise much, but perform nothing, she proposed to employ one Wingfield, who had both courage and inclination to strike the blow."

The queen's calling Paulet a dainty and precise fellow, has little connection with her proposing to have recourse to the assistance of Wingfield. The author's meaning might have been diffused into two distinct periods: "On the receipt of this answer, Elizabeth became extremely peevish, and called him a dainty and a precise fellow, who would promise much but perform nothing. She next proposed to employ one

Wingfield, who had both courage and inclination to strike the blow."

"But Davidson's remonstrating against this method, as no less dangerous than dishonourable, she again declared her intention that the sentence pronounced by the commissioners should be executed according to law; and as she had already signed the warrant, she begged that no farther application might be made to her on that head. By this the Privy Counsellors thought themselves sufficiently authorized to proceed, and prompted, as they pretended, by zeal for the queen's safety, or instigated, as is more probable, by the apprehension of the danger to which they would themselves be exposed if the life of the queen of Scots were spared, they assembled in the council chamber, and by a letter under all their hands, empowered the Earls of Shrewsbury and Kent, together with the High Sheriff of the county, to see the sentence put in execution."

In the last sentence the repetition of the word *queen* might without much difficulty have been avoided.

"On Tuesday the seventh of February, the two Earls arrived at Fotheringay, and demanding access to the queen, read in her presence the warrant for execution, and required her to prepare to die next morning."

We again meet with the word *queen* in this period, though it occurs twice in the last. *Execution* closes the former sentence; yet it is also found to occupy an important place in this. These, it must be confessed, are errors of a very trivial kind; but if they are errors, an author should endeavour to avoid them. If, however, they cannot be removed without weakening the expression, they ought beyond all doubt to be retained.

"Mary heard them to the end without emotion; and crossing herself in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; 'That soul,' said she, 'is not worthy of the joys of heaven which repines because the body must endure the stroke of the executioner: and although I did not expect that the queen of England would set the first example of violating

the sacred person of a sovereign prince, I willingly submit to that which Providence has decreed to be my lot."

The author might have said *in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*; but the expression which he has adopted, produces a much better effect.

"And laying her hand on a Bible, which happened to be near her, she solemnly protested that she was innocent of that conspiracy which Babington had carried on against Elizabeth's life. She then mentioned the requests contained in her letter to Elizabeth, but obtained no satisfactory answer. She entreated with particular earnestness, that now in her last moments, her almoner might be suffered to attend her, and that she might enjoy the consolation of those pious institutions prescribed by her religion. Even this favour, which is usually granted to the vilest criminal, was absolutely denied."

The third of these sentences possesses considerable beauty.

"Her attendants, during this conversation, were bathed in tears, and though overawed by the presence of the two earls, with difficulty suppressed their anguish; but no sooner did Kent and Shrewsbury withdraw, than they ran to their mistress, and burst out into the most passionate expressions of tenderness and sorrow."

At the commencement of this period, the more natural order of the words ought perhaps to have been followed: "During this conversation, her attendants were bathed in tears." This seems in every respect preferable to the other mode of arrangement.

"Mary, however, not only retained perfect composure of mind, but endeavoured to moderate their excessive grief. And falling on her knees, with all her domestics round her, she thanked Heaven that her sufferings were now so near an end; and prayed that she might be enabled to endure what still remained with decency and with fortitude. The greater part of the evening she employed in settling her worldly affairs. She wrote her testament with her own hand. Her money, her jewels, and her clothes, she distributed among her servants ac-

according to their rank or merit. She wrote a short letter to the king of France, and another to the Duke of Guise, full of tender but magnanimous sentiments, and recommended her soul to their prayers, and her afflicted servants to their protection. At supper, she eat temperately, as usual, and conversed not only with ease, but with cheerfulness; she drank to every one of her servants, and asked their forgiveness, if ever she had failed in any part of her duty towards them. At her wonted time she went to bed, and slept calmly a few hours. Early in the morning she retired to her closet, and employed a considerable time in devotion. At eight o'clock the high sheriff and his officers entered her chamber and found her still kneeling at the altar. She immediately started up, and with a majestic mien, and a countenance undismayed and even cheerful, advanced towards the place of execution leaning on two of Paullet's attendants. She was dressed in a mourning habit, but with an elegance and splendor which she had long laid aside, except on a few festival days. An *Agnus Dei* hung by a pomander chain at her neck; her beads at her girdle; and in her hand she carried a crucifix of ivory."

In this passage it would perhaps be impossible to improve a single sentence, either by substituting new words, or by altering the arrangement: every thing is distinct, accurate, and elegant.

"At the bottom of the stairs, the two earls, attended by several gentlemen from the neighbouring counties, received her; and there Sir Andrew Melvil, the master of her household, who had been secluded for some weeks from her presence, was permitted to take his last farewell. At the sight of a mistress whom he tenderly loved, in such a situation, he melted into tears; and as he was bewailing her condition, and complaining of his own hard fate in being appointed to carry the account of such a mournful event into Scotland, Mary replied, 'Weep not, good Melvil; there is at present greater cause for rejoicing. Thou shalt this day see Mary Stewart delivered from all her cares, and such an end put to her tedious sufferings, as she has long expected. Bear witness that I die constant in my religion; firm in my fidelity towards Scotland; and unchanged in my

affection to France. Commend me to my son. Tell him I have done nothing injurious to his kingdom, to his honour, or to his rights; and God forgive all those who have thirsted, without cause, for my blood."

At the sight of a mistress whom he tenderly loved, in such a situation, he melted into tears. The author's meaning is, "That he melted into tears on beholding his beloved mistress in such a situation"; but the manner in which he has expressed himself, is somewhat ambiguous. *

The beautiful passage which we have been considering in the course of this chapter, is rendered more captivating by means of those dramatic touches with which it is interspersed. It is not to be supposed that any of these short speeches was originally delivered in the identical words which are here adopted by the historian. All that can reasonably be required is, that he express the very same sentiment. An ingenious writer, however, delivers a different opinion with regard to this subject. "An excess of polish and refinement," says Dr. Ferriar, "among other inconveniences, tempts the historian to suppress or vary the strong original expressions, which trying occasions extort from men of genius. Yet these, infinitely superior to phrases which have cooled in the critical balance, always form the brightest ornaments of a well-composed history. They transport our imagination to the scene, domesticate us with eminent men, and afford us a kind of temporary existence in other ages. Few of our writers, excepting Lloyd, have attended sufficiently to the preservation of these flashes of sentiment and intelligence. A single word sometimes conveys as much information of character and principles, as a whole dissertation." * These observations are cer-

* Ferriar's Menippean Essay on English Historians.

tainly just: but how is it possible to ascertain whether in every instance such expressions have actually been used by the persons to whom they are attributed? We even find that in reporting the expressions used on certain occasions by our Saviour, his disciples do not always completely coincide with each other. They express the same meaning, but in different words. If therefore a writer in our own times were to copy such expressions as are here alluded to from some ancient English chronologist, he might happen to deviate almost as far from those originally uttered, as he could do by varying the phraseology according to his particular taste.

"With much difficulty and after many entreaties she prevailed on the two Earls to allow Melvil, together with three of her men servants, and two of her maids, to attend her to the scaffold. It was erected in the same hall where she had been tried, raised a little above the floor, and covered, as well as a chair, the cushion, and block, with black cloth. Mary mounted the steps with alacrity, beheld all this apparatus of death with an unaltered countenance, and, signing herself with the cross, *she* sat down in the chair."

In the last of these sentences the pronoun *she* appears superfluous. I should prefer the subsequent reading: "Mary mounted the steps with alacrity: she beheld this apparatus of death with an unaltered countenance, and, signing herself with the cross, sat down in the chair."

"Beale read the warrant for execution with a loud voice, to which she listened with a careless air, and like one occupied in other thoughts. Then the Dean of Peterborough began a devout discourse, suitable to her present condition, and offering up prayers to heaven in her behalf; but she declared that she could not in conscience hearken to the one, nor join with the other; and, falling on her knees, repeated a Latin prayer."

In the prose writings of modern English authors the adverb *then* is seldom placed at the beginning of a sentence. But in a description of this solemn kind, it perhaps would not have such a good effect in any other position. The author might have said, "the Dean of Peterborough then began a devout discourse, suitable to her present condition;" but he has with propriety adopted a different mode of arrangement. The sentence does not close with much felicity: the last clause forms no due counterbalance to the one immediately preceding.

"When the Dean had finished his devotions, she with an audible voice, and in the English tongue, recommended unto God the afflicted state of the church, and prayed for prosperity to her son, and for a long life, and peaceable reign to Elizabeth. She declared that she hoped for mercy only through the death of Christ, at the foot of whose image she now willingly shed her blood; and lifting up and blessing the crucifix, she thus addressed: "As thy arms, O Jesus, were extended on the cross; so with the outstretched arms of thy mercy, receive me, and forgive my sins."

She declared that she hoped for mercy only through the death of Christ. The position of the adverb *only* occasions some degree of ambiguity. Instead of conveying what is evidently the author's meaning, these words may imply, "that through the death of Christ, she hoped for nothing besides mercy." This ambiguity, however, it would be difficult in the present instance to remove, except by adopting a quite different phraseology. Should we place the adverb after *Christ*, the sense would still be left ambiguous; nor could the defect be remedied by placing it after *death*. *She thus addressed.* The verb *address* is very seldom used in a neuter sense, except poetical compositions.

"She then prepared for the block, by taking off her veil and upper garments; and one of the executioners rudely endeavour-

ing to assist, she gently checked him, and said, with a smile, that she had not been accustomed to undress before so many spectators, nor to be served by such valets. With calm but undaunted fortitude, she laid her neck on the block; and while one executioner held her hands, the other, at the second stroke, cut off her head, which falling out of its attire, discovered her hair already grown quite grey, with cares and sorrows. The executioner held it up still streaming with blood, and the Dean crying out, "So perish all queen Elizabeth's enemies," the Earl of Kent alone answered Amen. The rest of the spectators continued silent, and drowned in tears; being incapable at that moment, of any other sentiments but those of pity or admiration."*

This passage forms a very proper conclusion to the beautiful narration which we have been employed in examining.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Of the Method of Attaining a Good Style.

To pretend to teach the art of fine writing by a series of mechanical rules, would be highly absurd. The young student may, however, be assisted by a few plain directions concerning the proper method of attaining a style correct and elegant.

We must always endeavour to obtain a clear and precise idea of every subject of which we propose to treat. This is a direction which may at first appear to have little relation to style. Its relation to it, however, is extremely close. The foundation of fine writing is good sense, accompanied with a lively imagination.

* History of Scotland, book vii.

The style and thoughts of a writer are so intimately connected, that it is frequently a difficult task to distinguish what depends upon the one and what upon the other. Whenever the impressions of objects upon the mind are faint and indistinct, or perplexed and confused, our style in treating of such objects can never be luminous or beautiful. Whereas, what we conceive clearly and feel strongly, we shall naturally express with clearness and with strength. This, then, we may be assured, is an important rule; to think closely of the subject, till we have attained a full and distinct view of the matter which we are to clothe in words, till we become warm and interested in it: then, and not till then, shall we find expression begin to flow. Generally speaking, the best and most proper expressions are those which a clear view of the subject suggests, without much labour or inquiry.

To form a good style, the frequent practice of composing is indispensably necessary. Many rules concerning style have been delivered; but no rules will answer the end without exercise and habit. At the same time, it is not every mode of composing that will improve style. This is so far from being the case, that by careless and hasty composition, we shall inevitably acquire a very bad style; we shall have more trouble afterwards in unlearning faults and correcting negligences, than if we had been totally unaccustomed to composition. At first, therefore, we ought to write slowly and with much care. Let the facility and speed of writing be the fruit of long practice.

"I enjoin," says Quintilian, "that such as are beginning the practice of composition, write slowly and with anxious deliberation. Their great object at first should be, to write as well as possible: practice will enable them to write speedily. By degrees, matter

will offer itself still more readily; words will be at hand; composition will flow; every thing, as in the arrangement of a well-ordered family, will present itself in its proper place. The sum of the whole is this: that by hasty composition, we shall never acquire the art of composing well; by writing well, we shall come to write speedily.”*

We must not, however, be too anxious about words; we must not retard the course of thought, nor cool the heat of imagination, by pausing too long on every word which we employ. There is, on certain occasions, a glow of composition which should be kept up if we hope to express ourselves happily, though at the expense of allowing some inadvertencies to pass. These must afterwards be scrutinized with a critical eye. If the practice of composition be useful, the laborious work of correcting is no less so; it is absolutely necessary to our reaping any benefit from the habit of composing. What we have written, should be laid aside till the ardour of composition be past, till our fondness for the expressions which we have used, be worn off, and the expressions themselves be forgotten. By reviewing our work with a cool and critical eye, as if it were the performance of another, we shall discern many imperfections which at first escaped our observation. It is then the season for pruning redundancies; for examining the arrangement of sentences; and for bringing style into a regular, correct, and supported form. To this labour of correction all those must submit who would communicate their thoughts to others with proper advantage; and some practice in it will soon sharpen the eye to the most necessary objects of attention, and render the task much more

* Quintilian, de Institut. lib. x. cap. iii.

easy and practicable than might at first be imagined. With respect to the assistance which is to be derived from the writings of others, it is obvious that we ought to render ourselves well acquainted with the style of the best authors. This is requisite both to form a just taste in style, and to supply us with a full stock of words on every subject.

But we must beware of falling into a servile imitation of any author whatsoever. Imitation is always dangerous. It fetters genius, and is likely to produce a stiff manner. Those who are addicted to close imitation, generally imitate an author's faults as well as his beauties. No man will ever become a good writer or speaker, who has not some degree of confidence to follow his own genius. We ought to beware, in particular, of adopting any author's noted phrases, or transcribing passages from him. Such a habit will prove fatal to all genuine composition. It is much better to have something that is our own, though of moderate beauty, than to affect to shine in borrowed ornaments which will at last betray the utter poverty of our genius. A preposterous ambition to imitate or rival the characteristic manner of Dr. Johnson or Mr. Gibbon, has rendered many authors ridiculous, who might otherwise have supported a respectable character. The style of each of these writers, eminent as they deservedly are, exhibits numerous faults: but whatever may be their beauties, no man of letters will ever obtain much distinction by imitating them with accurate servility. We generally find their deformities more faithfully copied than their beauties. Mr. George Chalmers, an author utterly destitute of taste, learning, and ability,* seems to consider himself as the most formi

* They hail thee master of a seven-fold skull,
With learning stor'd, with various fancy full,

dable rival of Dr. Johnson; and his life of Ruddiman, who deserved a very different biographer, is the most consummately ridiculous sample of imitation which belongs to any age or country. On these heads of composing, reading, and imitating, I would advise every student of oratory to consult what Quintilian has delivered in the tenth book of his Institutions; where he will find a variety of excellent observations and directions.

Those who are ambitious of attaining a beautiful style, ought to study with attention the works of the most eminent poets. From this source is often derived a more delicate and elevated mode of expression, as well as of thinking. We find that the most excellent prose writers, both of ancient and modern times, are those who, during some part of their life, have applied themselves to the study of poetry. It will be sufficient to mention the names of Plato, Cicero, Temple, Dryden, Pope, Addison, Johnson, Goldsmith, Beattie, Fenelon, and Voltaire.

It is an obvious but material rule, that we always study to adapt our style to the subject, and also to the capacity of our hearers, if we are to speak in public. Nothing merits the name of eminent or beautiful, which is not suited to the occasion, and to the persons to whom it is addressed. It is to the last degree awkward and absurd, to adopt a florid poetical style on occasions when it should be our sole business to argue and reason; or to speak with elaborate pomp of expression, before persons who comprehend nothing of it, and who can only stare at our unseasonable magnificence. These are defects not so much in point of style, as, what is much worse, in point of common sense. When we begin to write or speak, we ought previously to have fixed in our minds a clear concep-

tion of the end to which our chief attention is to be directed. This end we ought to keep steadily in view; and to it we ought to adapt our style. If we do not sacrifice to this great object every ill-timed ornament which may occur to our fancy, we betray a want of judgment.

I cannot conclude the subject without this observation, that in any case, and on any occasion, attention to style must not engross us so much, as to detract from a higher degree of attention to the thoughts. To your expression be attentive; but about your matter be solicitous.



Examples illustrative of the progressive Improvement of English Composition.

SIDNEY.

LET learned Greece, in any of her manifest sciences, be able to shew me one book before Musæus, Homer, and Hesiod; all three nothing else but poets. Nay, let any history be brought, that can say any writers were there before them, if they were not men of the same skill, as Orpheus, Linus, and some others are named, who having been the first of that country that made pens deliverers of their knowledge to posterity, may justly challenge to be called their fathers in learning. For not only in time they had this priority (although in itself antiquity be venerable) but went before them, as causes to draw, with their charming sweetness, the wild untamed wits to an admiration of knowledge. So as Amphion was said to move stones with his poetry to build Thebes, and Orpheus to be listened to by beasts, indeed stony and beastly people:

So among the Romans were Livius Andronicus, and Ennius: So in the Italian language, the first that made it to aspire to be a treasure-house of science, were the poets Dante, Boccace, and Petrarch: So in our English, were Gower and Chaucer: after whom, encouraged and delighted with their excellent foregoing, others have followed to beautify our mother tongue, as well in the same kind as other arts.

This did so notably shew itself, that the philosophers of Greece durst not a long time appear to the world, but under the mask of poets: So Thales, Empedocles; and Parmenides, sang their natural philosophy in verses: So did Pythagoras and Phocylides their moral counsels: So did Tyrtæus in war matters, and Solon in matters of policy; or rather, they being poets, did exercise their delightful vein in those points of highest knowledge, which before them lay hidden to the world: for that Solon was directly a poet, it is manifest, having written in verse the noble fable of the Atlantic Island, which was continued by Plato. And truly even Plato whosoever well considereth, shall find, that in the body of his work, though the inside and strength were philosophy, the skin, as it were, and beauty, depended most of poetry. For all stands upon dialogues; wherein he feins many honest burgesses of Athens speaking of such matters, that if they had been set on the rack, they never would have confessed them: besides, his poetical describing the circumstances of their meetings, as the well-ordering of a banquet, the delicacy of a walk, and interlacing mere tales, as Gyges's ring, and others; which, who knows not to be flowers of poetry, did never walk in Apollo's garden.

[*Defence of Poesy.*

RALEIGH.

God, whom the wisest men acknowledge to be a power ineffable, and virtue infinite, a light by abundant clarity invisible, an understanding which itself can only comprehend, an essence eternal and spiritual, of absolute pureness and simplicity, was, and is pleased to make himself known by the work of the world: in the wonderful magnitude whereof, (all of which he imbraceth, filleth, and sustaineth) we behold the image of that glory, which cannot be measured, and withal that one, and yet universal nature, which cannot be defined. In the glorious lights of heaven, we perceive a shadow of his divine countenance; in his merciful provision for all that live, his manifold goodness; and lastly, in creating and making existent the world universal, by the absolute act of his own word, his power and almightiness; which power, light, virtue, wisdom, and goodness, being all but attributes of one simple essence, and one God, we in all admire, and in part discern *per speculum creaturarum*, that is, in the disposition, order, and variety of celestial and terrestrial bodies; terrestrial, in their strange and manifold diversities; celestial in their beauty and magnitude; which in their continual and contrary motions, are neither repugnant, intermixed, nor confounded. By these potent effects, we approach to the knowledge of the omnipotent cause, and by these motions, their almighty mover.

[*History of the World.*]

BACON.

Revenge is a kind of wild justice; which the more man's nature runs to, the more ought law to weed it out. For as to the first wrong, it doth but offend the law; but the revenge of that wrong putteth the law out of office. Certainly, in taking revenge, a man is but

even with his enemy; but in passing it over he is superior: for it is a prince's part to pardon. And Solomon, I am sure; saith, "It is the glory of a man to pass by an offence." That which is past, is gone, and irrecoverable: and wise men have enough to do with things present, and to come: therefore, they do but trifle with themselves, that labour in past matters. There is no man doth a wrong for wrong's sake, but thereby to purchase himself profit or pleasure, or honour, or the like. Therefore why should I be angry with a man for loving himself better than me? and if any man should do wrong merely out of ill nature, why? yet it is but like the thorn or briar, which prick and scratch because they can do no other. The most tolerable sort of revenge, is for those wrongs which there is no law to remedy; but then let a man take heed, that the revenge be such as there is no law to punish; else a man's enemy is still before-hand, and it is two for one. Some when they take revenge, are desirous the party should know whence it cometh. This is the more generous: for the delight seemeth to be not so much in doing the hurt, as in making the party repent. But base and crafty cowards are like the arrow that flieth in the dark. Cosmus, the duke of Florence, had a desperate saying against perfidious or neglecting friends, as if their wrongs were unpardonable: "You shall read (saith he) that we are commanded to forgive our enemies; but you never read that we are commanded to forgive our friends." But yet the spirit of Job was in a better tune: "Shall we (saith he) take good at God's hand; and not be content to take evil also?" And so of friends in proportion. This is certain, that a man that studieth revenge, keeps his own wounds green, which otherwise would heal and do well. Public revenges are for the most part fortunate,

as that for the death of Cæsar, for the death of Pertinax, for the death of Henry the third of France, and many more. But in private revenges it is not so. Nay, rather vindictive persons live the life of witches; who as they are mischievous, so end they unfortunate.

[Essays, or Counsels, Civil and Moral.

JONSON.

For a man to write well, there are required three necessities; to read the best authors; observe the best speakers; and much exercise of his own style. In style to consider what ought to be written; and after what manner: he must first think, and excogitate his matter; then choose his words, and examine the weight of either. Then take care in placing, and ranking both matter and words, that the composition be comely; and to do this with diligence and often. No matter how slow the style be at first, so it be laboured and accurate; seek the best, and be not glad of the forward conceits, or first words, that offer themselves to us; but judge of what we invent, and order what we approve. Repeat often what we have formerly written; which, beside that it helps the consequence, and makes the juncture better, it quickens the heat of imagination, that often cools in the time of setting down, and gives it new strength, as if it grew lustier by the going back. As we see in the contention of leaping, they jump farthest, that fetch their race largest; or, as in throwing a dart or javelin, we force back our arms, to make our loose the stronger. Yet, if we have a fair gale of wind, I forbid not the steering out of our sail, so the favour of the gale deceive us not. For all that we invent doth please us in the conception or birth; else we should never set it down. But the safest is to return to our judgment, and handle over again those

things the easiness of which might make them justly suspected. So did the best writers in their beginnings; they imposed upon themselves care and industry. They did nothing rashly. They obtained first to write well, and then custom made it easy and a habit. By little and little their matter shewed itself to them more plentifully; their words answered, their composition followed; and all, as in a well-ordered family, presented itself in the place. So that the sum of all is; ready writing makes not good writing; but good writing brings on ready writing; yet when we think we have got the faculty, it is even then good to resist it; as to give a horse a check sometimes with a bit, which doth not so much stop his course, as stir his mettle.

*Discoveries.**

HOOKER.

They of whom God is altogether unapprehended are but few in number, and for grossness of parts, such that they hardly and scarcely seem to hold the place of human beings. These we should judge to be of all others most miserable, but a wretcheder sort there are, on whom whereas nature hath bestowed riper capacity, their evil disposition seriously goeth about therewith to apprehend God, as being not God. Whereby it cometh to pass, that of these two sorts of men, both godless, the one having utterly no knowledge of God, the other study how to persuade themselves that there is no such thing to be known. The fountain and well spring of which impiety is a resolved purpose of mind to reap in this world what sensual profit or pleasure, soever the world yieldeth, and not to be barred from

* The reader will meet with few *discoveries* in the passage now quoted: several of the observations contained in it are borrowed from Quintilian.

any whatsoever means available thereunto. And that that is the very radical cause of their atheism, no man (I think) will doubt, which considereth, what pains they take to destroy those principal spurs and motives unto all virtue, the creation of the world, the providence of God, the resurrection of the dead, the joys of the kingdom of heaven, and the endless pains of the wicked, yea above all things, the authority of the Scripture, because on these points it evermore beareth, and the soul's immortality, which granted, draweth easily after it the rest, as a voluntary train. Is it not wonderful that base desires should so extinguish in men the sense of their own excellency, as to make them willing that their souls should be like to the souls of beasts, mortal and corruptible with their bodies? Till some admirable or unusual accident happen (as it hath in some) to work the beginning of a better alteration in their minds, disputation about the knowledge of God with such kind of persons commonly prevaieth little. For how should the brightness of wisdom shine, where the windows of the soul are of very set purpose closed? True religion hath many things in it, the only mention whereof galleth and troubleth their minds. Being therefore loth that enquiry into such matters should breed a persuasion in the end contrary to that they embrace, it is their endeavour to banish, as much as in them lieth, quite and clean from their cogitation, whatsoever may sound that way. But it cometh many times to pass (which is their torment) that the thing they shun doth follow them; truth, as it were, even obtruding itself into their knowledge, and not permitting them to be so ignorant as they would be. Whereupon, in as much as the nature of man is unwilling to continue doing that wherein it shall always condemn itself, they continuing still obstinate to follow the

course which they have begun, are driven to devise all the shifts that wit can invent for the smothering of this light, all that may with any but the least shew of possibility stay their minds from thinking that true, which they heartily wish were false, but cannot think it so, without some scruple and fear of the contrary.

[*Ecclesiastical Polity.*

HOBBS.

The cause of dreams (if they be natural) are the actions of violence of the inward parts of a man upon his brain, by which the passages of sense, by sleep benumbed, are restored to their motion. The signs by which this appeareth to be so, are the differences of dreams (old men commonly dream oftener, and have their dreams more painful than young) proceeding from the different accidents of man's body; as dreams of lust, as dreams of anger, according as the heart, or other parts within, work more or less upon the brain, by more or less heat, so also the descent of different sorts of phlegm maketh us a dream of different tastes of meats and drinks; and I believe there is a reciprocation of motion from the brain to the vital parts, and back from the vital parts to the brain; whereby not only imagination begetteth motion in these parts, but also motion in these parts begetteth imagination like to that which it was begotten. If this be true, and that sad imaginations nourish the spleen, then we see also a cause, why a strong spleen reciprocally causeth fearful dreams, and why the effects of lasciviousness may in a dream produce the image of some person that had produced them. Another sign that dreams are caused by the action of the inward parts, is the disorder and casual consequence of one conception or image to another; for when we are waking, the aute-

cedent thought or conception introduceth, and is cause of the consequent, (as the water followeth a man's dry finger upon a dry and level table) but in dreams there is commonly no coherence (and when there is, it is by chance) which must needs proceed from this, that the brain in dreams is not restored to its motion in every part alike; whereby it cometh to pass, that our thoughts appear like the stars between the flying clouds, not in the order in which a man would choose to observe them, but as the uncertain flight of broken clouds permits.

[*Human Nature.*

MILTON.

The end of learning is to repair the ruin of our first parents, by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love him, to imitate him, to be like him, as we may the nearest by possessing our souls of true virtue, which being united to the heavenly grace of faith, makes up the highest perfection. But because our understanding cannot in this body find itself but on sensible things, nor arrive so clearly to the knowledge of God and things invisible, as by orderly conning over the visible and inferior creature, the same method is necessarily to be followed in discreet teaching. And seeing every nation affords not experience and tradition enough for all kinds of learning, therefore we are chiefly taught the languages of those people who have at any time been most industrious after wisdom; so that language is but the instrument conveying to us things useful to be known. And tho' a linguist should pride himself to have all the tongues that Babel cleft the world into, yet, if he had not studied the solid things in them as well as the words and lexicons, he were nothing to be so much esteem'd a learned man, as any yeoman or tradesman competently

wise in his mother dialect only. Hence appear the many mistakes which have made learning generally so unpleasing and so unsuccessful: first we do amiss to spend seven or eight years merely in scraping together so much miserable Latin and Greek, as might be learned otherwise easily and delightfully in one year. And that which casts our proficiency therein so much behind, is our time lost partly in too oft idle vacancies given both to schools and universities, partly in a preposterous exaction, forcing the empty wits of children to compose themes, verses, and orations, which are the acts of ripest judgment, and the final work of a head fill'd, by long reading and observing, with elegant maxims, and copious invention. These are not matters to be wrung from poor striplings, like blood out of the nose, or the plucking of untimely fruit.

[*Tractate of Education.*

COWLEY.

The first minister of state has not so much business in public, as a wise man has in private: if the one have little leisure to be alone, the other has less leisure to be in company; the one has but part of the affairs of one nation, the other all the works of God and nature under his consideration. There is no saying shocks me so much as that which I hear very often, that a man does not know how to pass his time. 'Twould have been but ill spoken by Methusalem in the nine hundred sixty-ninth year of his life; so far it is from us, who have not time enough to attain to the utmost perfection of any part of any science, to have cause to complain that we are forced to be idle for want of work. But this, you'll say, is work only for the learned: others are not capable either of the employments or divertisements that arrive from letters. I know

they are not: and therefore cannot much recommend solitude to a man totally illiterate. But if any man be so unlearned as to want entertainment of the little intervals of accidental solitude, which frequently occur in almost all conditions (except the very meanest of the people, who have business enough in the very provisions of life) it is truly a great shame both to his parents and himself; for a very small portion of any ingenious art will stop up all those gaps of our time; either music, or painting, or designing, or chymistry, or history, or gardening, or twenty other things will do it usefully and pleasantly; and if he happen to set his affections upon poetry (which I do not advise him to immediately) that will overdo it; no wood will be thick enough to hide him from the importunities of company or business, which would abstract him from his beloved.

[Discourses by way of Essays.]

HALE.

There are two great duties that we owe unto God, which are never out of season, but such as we have continual occasion and necessity to use whilst we live; namely, prayer and thanksgiving.

Prayer is always seasonable in this life, because we ever stand in need of it: we always want something, and have always occasion to fear something: although we could be supposed in such a state of happiness in this world, that we could not say we wanted any thing, yet we have cause to pray for the continuance of the happiness we enjoy, which is not so fixed and stable but that it may leave us: "I said in my prosperity I shall never be moved; thou hidest thy face and I was troubled." We are never out of the reach of divine providence, either to relieve or afflict us; and therefore we are under a continual necessity of prayer, either to

relieve and supply us, at least to preserve and uphold us.

Thanksgiving is likewise always seasonable, because we are never without something that we receive from the divine goodness, that deserves and requires our thankfulness. It may be we want wealth, yet have we not health? if we want both, yet have we not life? if we want temporal blessings, yet have we not eternal, everlasting blessings? If we have any thing that is comfortable to, or convenient for us, we have it from the goodness and bounty of God. And though we have not all we would, yet we have what we deserve not, and what we prize and value: and therefore while we have any thing, we have occasion of thanksgiving to our great benefactor.

[*Contemplations Moral and Divine.*

BROWNE.

I could never divide myself from any man upon the difference of an opinion, or be angry with his judgment for not agreeing with me in that, from which perhaps within a few days I should dissent myself: I have no genius to disputes in religion, and have often thought it wisdom to decline them, especially upon a disadvantage, or when the cause of truth might suffer in the weakness of my patronage; where we desire to be informed, 'tis good to contest with men above ourselves; but to confirm and establish our opinions, 'tis best to argue with judgments below our own, that the frequent spoils and victories over their reasons may settle in ourselves an esteem, and confirmed opinion of our own. Every man is not a proper champion for truth, nor fit to take up the gauntlet in the cause of verity: Many from the ignorance of these maxims, and an inconsiderate zeal unto truth, have too rashly

charged the troops of error, and remain as trophies unto the enemies of truth: A man may be in as just possession of truth as of a city, and yet be forced to surrender; 'tis therefore far better to enjoy her with peace, than to hazard her on a battle.

[*Religio. Medici.*

TEMPLE.

The safety and firmness of any frame of government may be best judged by the rules of architecture, which teach us that the pyramid is of all figures the firmest, and least subject to be shaken or overthrown by any concussions or accidents from the earth or air; and it grows still so much the firmer, by how much broader the bottom and sharper the top.

The ground upon which all government stands, is the consent of the people, or the greatest or strongest part of them; whether this proceed from reflections upon what is past, by the reverence of any authority under which they and their ancestors have for many ages been born and bred; or from a sense of what is present, by the ease, plenty, and safety they enjoy; or from opinions of what is to come, by the fear they have from the present government, or hopes from another. Now that government which by any of these, or by all these ways, takes in the consent of the greatest number of the people, and consequently their desires and resolutions to support it, may justly be said to have the broadest bottom, and to stand upon the largest compass of ground; and, if it terminate in the authority of one single person, it may likewise be said to have the narrowest top, and so to make the figure of the firmest sort of pyramid. [*Essay on Government.*

DRYDEN.

'Tis not only commended by ancient practice, to celebrate the memory of great and worthy men, as the best thanks which posterity can pay them; but also the examples of virtue are of more vigour, when they are thus contracted into individuals. As the sun-beams, united in a burning glass to a point, have greater force than when they are darted from a plain superficies; so the virtues and actions of one man, drawn together in a single story, strike upon our minds a stronger and more lively impression, than the scatter'd relations of many men, and many actions; and by the same means that they give us pleasure, they afford us profit too. For when the understanding is intent and fixed on a single thing, it carries closer to the mark; every part of the object sinks into it, and the soul receives it unmixed and whole. For this reason Aristotle commends the unity of action in a poem; because the mind is not capable of digesting many things at once, nor of conceiving fully any more than one idea at a time. Whatsoever distracts the pleasure, lessens it. And as the reader is more concerned at one man's fortune, than those of many; so likewise the writer is more capable of making a perfect work if he confine himself to this narrow compass. The lineaments, features, and colourings, of a single picture, may be hit exactly; but in a history-piece of many figures, the general design, the ordinance or disposition of it, the relation of one figure to another, the diversity of posture, habits, shadowings, and all the other graces conspiring to an uniformity, are of so difficult performance, that neither is the resemblance of particular persons often perfect, nor the beauty of the piece complete: For any considerable error in the parts, renders the whole disagreeable and lame. Thus then the perfec-

tions of the work, and the benefit arising from it are more absolute in biography than in history.

[*Life of Plutarch.*

SHAFTESBURY.

Notwithstanding there may be implanted in the heart a real sense of right and wrong, a real good affection towards the species or society; yet, by the violence of rage, lust, or any other counter-working passion, this good affection may frequently be controlled and overcome. Where therefore there is nothing in the mind capable to render such ill passions the object of its aversion, and cause them earnestly to be opposed, it is apparent how much a good temper in time may suffer, and a character by degrees change for the worse. But if religion interposing, creates a belief that the ill passions of this kind, no less than their consequent actions, are the objects of a deity's animadversion; it is certain that such a belief must prove a seasonable remedy against vice, and be in a particular manner advantageous to virtue. For a belief of this kind must be supposed to tend considerably towards the calming of the mind, and disposing or fitting the person to a better recollection of himself, and to a stricter observance of that good and virtuous principle, which needs only his attention, to engage him wholly in its party and interest.

[*Inquiry concerning Virtue.*

ADDISON.

Man, considered in himself, is a very helpless and a very wretched being. He is subject every moment to the greatest calamities and misfortunes. He is beset with dangers on all sides, and may become unhap-

py by numberless casualties, which he could not foresee, nor have prevented had he foreseen them.

It is our comfort, while we are obnoxious to so many accidents, that we are under the care of one who directs contingencies, and has in his hands the management of every thing that is capable of annoying or offending us; who knows the assistance we stand in need of, and is always ready to bestow it on those who ask it of him.

The natural homage which such a creature bears to so infinitely wise and good a being, is a firm reliance on him for the blessings and conveniences of life, and an habitual trust in him for deliverance out of all such dangers and difficulties as may befall us.—[*Spectator*.

ARBUTHNOT.

If we consider to what perfection we now know the courses, periods, order, distances, and proportions, of the several great bodies of the universe, at least such as fall within our view; we shall have cause to admire the sagacity and industry of the mathematicians, and the power of numbers and geometry well apply'd Let us cast our eyes backward, and consider astronomy in its infancy; or rather let us suppose it still to begin: for instance, a colony of rude country people, transplanted into an island remote from the commerce of all mankind, without so much as the knowledge of the calendar, and the periods of the seasons, without instruments to make observations, or any the least notion of observation or instruments. When is it, we could expect any of their posterity should arrive at the art of predicting an eclipse? Not only so, but the art of reckoning all eclipses that are past or to come for any number of years? When is it we should suppose that one of these islanders, transported to any other

part of the earth, should be able by the inspection of the heavens to find how much he were south or north, east or west of his own island, and to conduct his ship back thither? For my part, though I know this may be, and is daily done, by what is known in astronomy; yet when I consider the vast industry, sagacity, multitude of observations, and other extrinsick things necessary for such a sublime piece of knowledge, I should be apt to pronounce it impossible, and never to be hoped for. Now we are let so much into the knowledge of the machine of the universe, and motion of its parts by the rules of this science, perhaps the invention may seem easy. But when we reflect, what penetration and contrivance were necessary to lay the foundation of so great and extensive an art, we cannot but admire its first inventors.

[*Essay on Mathematical Learning.*

POPE.

Homer is universally allowed to have the greatest invention of any writer whatever. The praise of judgment Virgil has justly contested with him, and others may have their pretensions as to particular excellencies; but his invention remains yet unrivalled. Nor is it a wonder if he has ever been acknowledged the greatest of poets, who most excelled in that which is the very foundation of poetry. It is the invention that in different degrees distinguishes all great geniuses; the utmost stretch of human study, learning, and industry, which master every thing besides, can never attain to this. It furnishes art with all her materials; and, without it, judgment itself can at best but *steal wisely*: for art is only like a prudent steward that lives on managing the riches of nature. Whatever praises may be given to works of judgment, there is not even

a single beauty in them, to which the invention must not contribute. As, in the most regular gardens, art can only reduce the beauties of nature to more regularity, and such a figure, which the common eye may better take in, and is therefore more entertained with. And perhaps the reason why common critics are inclined to prefer a judicious and methodical genius to a great and fruitful one, is, because they find it easier for themselves to pursue their observations through an uniform and unbounded walk of art, than to comprehend the vast and various extent of nature.

Our author's work is a wild paradise, where if we cannot see all the beauties so distinctly as in an ordered garden, it is only because the number of them is infinitely greater. 'Tis like a copious nursery which contains the seeds and first productions of every kind, out of which those who followed him have but selected some particular plants, each according to his fancy, to cultivate and beautify. If some things are too luxuriant, it is owing to the richness of the soil; and if others are not arrived to perfection and maturity, it is only because they are over-run and oppressed by those of a stronger nature. [*Preface to Homer's Iliad.*]

SWIFT.

It is likewise urged, that there are, by computation, in this kingdom, above ten thousand parsons; whose revenues, added to those of my lords the bishops, would suffice to maintain at least two hundred young gentlemen of wit, and pleasure, and free-thinking: enemies to priest-craft, narrow principles, pedantry, and prejudices; who might be an ornament to the court and town: and then again, so great a number of able (bodied) divines might be a recruit to our fleets and armies. This, indeed, appears to be a consideration

of some weight: but then, on the other hand, several things deserve to be considered likewise: as, first, whether it may not be thought necessary, that in certain tracts of country, like what we call parishes, there should be *one* man at least, of abilities to read and write. Then it seems a wrong computation, that the revenues of the church throughout this island would be large enough to maintain two hundred young gentlemen, or even half that number, after the present refined way of living; that is, to allow each of them such a rent, as, in the modern form of speech, might make them *easy*. But still there is in this project a greater mischief behind; and we ought to beware of the woman's folly, who killed the hen that every morning laid her a golden egg. For pray what would become of the race of men in the next age, if we had nothing to trust to, besides the scrofulous, consumptive productions furnished by our men of wit and pleasure; when, having squandered away their vigour, health, and estates, they are forced by some disagreeable marriage, to piece up their broken fortunes, and entail rottenness and politeness on their posterity?

[Argument against abolishing Christianity.]

BERKELEY.

As the whole earth, and the entire duration of those perishing things contained in it, is altogether inconsiderable, or, in the prophet's expressive style, *less than nothing*, in respect of eternity; who sees not, that every reasonable man ought so to frame his actions, as that they may most effectually contribute to promote his eternal interest? And since it is a truth evident by the light of nature, that there is a sovereign omniscient spirit, who alone can make us for ever happy, or for ever miserable; it plainly follows that a conformity to

his will, and not any prospect of temporal advantage, is the sole rule whereby every man who acts up to the principles of reason, must govern and square his actions. The same conclusion doth likewise evidently result from the relation which God bears to his creatures. God alone is maker and preserver of all things; he is, therefore, with the most undoubted right the great legislator of the world; and mankind are, by all the ties of duty, no less than interest, bound to obey his laws.

Hence we should above all things endeavour to trace out the divine will, or the general design of Providence, with regard to mankind, and the methods most directly tending to the accomplishment of that design. And this seems the genuine and proper way for discovering the laws of nature. For laws being rules directive of our actions to the end intended by the legislator; in order to attain the knowledge of God's laws, we ought first to inquire, what that end is which he designs should be carried on by human actions. Now as God is a being of infinite goodness, it is plain, the end he proposes is good. But God enjoying in himself all possible perfection, it follows that it is not his own good, but that of his creatures. Again, the moral actions of men are entirely terminated within themselves, so as to have no influence on the other orders of intelligences or reasonable creatures: the end therefore to be procured by them, can be no other than the good of men. But as nothing in a natural state can entitle one man more than another to the favour of God, except only moral goodness, which, consisting in a conformity to the laws of God, doth presume the being of such laws; and law ever supposing an end to which it guides our actions; it follows that antecedent to the end proposed by God, no distinction can be con-

ceived between men; that end therefore itself, or general design of Providence, is not determined or limited by any respect of persons: it is not therefore the private good of this or that man, nation, or age, but the general well-being of all men, of all nations, of all ages of the world, which God designs should be procured by the concurring actions of each individual.

[*Discourse on Passive Obedience.*

BOLINGBROKE.

The limitations necessary to preserve liberty under monarchy will restrain effectually a bad prince, without being ever felt as shackles by a good one. Our constitution is brought, or almost brought, to such a point, or perfection I think it, that no king, who is not, in the true meaning of the word, a patriot, can govern Britain with ease, security, honour, dignity, or indeed with sufficient power and strength. But yet a king, who is a patriot, may govern with all the former; and, besides them, with power as extended as the most absolute monarch can boast; and a power, too, far more agreeable in the enjoyment, as well as more effectual in the operation.

On this subject let the imagination range through the whole glorious scene of a patriot reign: the beauty of the idea will inspire those transports, which Plato imagined the vision of virtue would inspire if virtue could be seen. What in truth can be so lovely? what so venerable, as to contemplate a king on whom the eyes of a whole people are fixed, filled with admiration, and glowing with affection? a king in the temper of whose government, like that of Nerva, things so seldom allied as empire and liberty are intimately mixed, co-exist together inseparably, and constitute one real essence? What spectacle can be presented to

the view of the mind so rare, so nearly divine, as a king possessed of absolute power, neither assumed by fraud nor maintained by force, but the genuine effect of esteem, of confidence, and affection: the free gift of Liberty, who finds her greatest security in this power, and would desire no other if the prince on the throne could be what his people wish him to be, immortal? Of such a prince, and of such a prince alone, it may be said with strict propriety and truth;

————— volentes

Per populos dat jura, viamque affectat Olympo.

Civil fury will have no place in this draught; or, if the monster is seen, he must be seen as Virgil describes him;

————— centum vinctus ahenis

Post tergum nodis, fremit horridus ore cruento.

He must be seen subdued, bound, chained, and deprived entirely of power to do hurt. In this place, concord will appear brooding peace and prosperity on the happy land, joy sitting in every face, content in every heart; a people unoppressed, undisturbed, unalarmed; busy to improve their private property and the public stock: fleets covering the ocean; bringing home wealth by the returns of industry, carrying assistance or terror abroad by the direction of wisdom; and asserting triumphantly the rights and the honour of Great Britain, as far as waters roll, and as winds can waft them.

[*Idea of a Patriot King.*]

MIDDLETON.

But to speak my mind freely on the subject of consequences. I am not so scrupulous perhaps in my regard to them, as many of my profession are apt to be: my nature is frank and open, and warmly disposed, not only to seek, but to speak, what I take to be true;

which disposition has been greatly confirmed by the situation into which Providence has thrown me. For I was never trained to pace in the trammels of the church, nor tempted by the sweets of its preferments, to sacrifice the philosophic freedom of a studious, to the servile restraints of an ambitious life: and from this very circumstance, as often as I reflect upon it, I feel that comfort in my own breast, which no external honours can bestow. I persuade myself, that the life and faculties of man, at the best short and limited, cannot be employed more rationally or laudably, than in the search of knowledge; and especially of that sort which relates to our duty, and conduces to our happiness. I look upon the discovery of any thing which is true, as a valuable acquisition to society; which cannot possibly hurt, or obstruct the good effect of any other truth whatsoever: for they all partake of one common essence, and necessarily coincide with each other; and, like the drops of rain, which fall separately into the river, mix themselves at once with the stream, and strengthen the general current.

[*Free Inquiry.*

HUME.

The street before Whitehall was the place destined for the execution: for it was intended, by choosing that very place, in sight of his own palace, to display more evidently the triumph of popular justice over royal majesty. When the king came upon the scaffold, he found it so surrounded with soldiers, that he could not expect to be heard by any of the people: he addressed, therefore, his discourse to the few persons who were about him: particularly Colonel Tomlinson, to whose care he had lately been committed, and upon whom, as upon many others, his amiable deportment

had wrought an entire conversion. He justified his own innocence in the late fatal wars, and observed that he had not taken arms till after the parliament had enlisted forces; nor had he any other object in his warlike operations, than to preserve that authority entire, which his predecessors had transmitted to him. He threw not, however, the blame upon the parliament; but was more inclined to think that ill instruments had interposed, and raised in them fears and jealousies with regard to his intentions. Though innocent towards his people, he acknowledged the equity of his execution in the eyes of his Maker, and observed that an unjust sentence, which he had suffered to take effect, was now punished by an unjust sentence upon himself. He forgave his enemies, even the chief instruments of his death: but exhorted them and the whole nation to return to the ways of peace, by paying obedience to their lawful sovereign, his son and successor.—At one blow was his head severed from his body. A man in a vizer performed the office of executioner: another, in a like disguise, held up to the spectators the head streaming with blood, and cried aloud, *This is the head of a traitor.*

It is impossible to describe the grief, indignation, and astonishment, which took place, not only among the spectators, who were overwhelmed with a flood of sorrow, but throughout the whole nation, as soon as the report of this fatal execution was conveyed to them. Never monarch, in the full triumph of success and victory, was more dear to his people, than his misfortunes and magnanimity, his patience and piety, had rendered this unhappy prince. In proportion to their former delusions, which had animated them against him, was the violence of their return to duty and affection; while each reproached himself,

either with active disloyalty towards him, or with too indolent defence of his oppressed cause. On weaker minds, the effect of these complicated passions was prodigious. Women are said to have cast forth the untimely fruit of their wombs: others fell into convulsions, or sunk into such a melancholy as attended them to their grave: nay, some unmindful of themselves, as though they could not, or would not, survive their beloved prince, it is reported, suddenly fell down dead. The very pulpits were bedewed with unsuborned tears; those pulpits which had formerly thundered out the most violent imprecations and anathemas against him. And all men united in their detestation of those hypocritical parricides, who, by sanctified pretences, had so long disguised their treasons, and in this last act of iniquity, had thrown an undeliable stain upon the nation.*

[*History of England.*

ROBERTSON.

As soon as the sun arose, all the boats were manned and armed. They rowed towards the island with the colours displayed, warlike music, and other martial pomp; and as they approached the coast, they saw it covered with a multitude of people whom the novelty of the spectacle had drawn together, and whose attitudes and gestures expressed wonder and astonishment at the strange objects which presented themselves to their view. Columbus was the first European who set foot in the New World which he had discovered. He landed in a rich dress, with a naked sword in his hand. His men followed, and kneeling

* If King Charles did not merit his fate, he at least provoked it; and all the rhetoric of Mr. Hume will not persuade any candid and enlightened person to the contrary.

down, they all kissed the ground which they had so long desired to see. They next erected a crucifix, and, prostrating themselves before it, returned thanks to God for conducting their voyage to such an happy issue. They then took solemn possession of the country for the crown of Castile and Leon, with all the formalities which the Portuguese were accustomed to observe in acts of this kind in their new discoveries.

The Spaniards, while thus employed, were surrounded by many of the natives, who gazed, in silent admiration, upon actions which they did not comprehend, and of which they did not foresee the consequences. The dress of the Spaniards, the whiteness of their skins, their beards, their arms, appeared strange and surprising. The vast machines in which they had traversed the ocean, that seemed to move upon the waters with wings, and uttered a dreadful sound resembling thunder, accompanied with lightning and smoke, struck them with such terror that they began to respect their new guests as a superior order of beings, and concluded that they were children of the Sun, who had descended to visit the earth.

[*History of America.*]

SMOLLETT.

Genius in writing spontaneously arose; and, though neglected by the great, flourished under the culture of a public which had pretensions to taste, and piqued itself on encouraging literary merit. Swift and Pope we have mentioned on another occasion. Young still survived, a venerable monument of poetical talents. Thomson, the poet of the Seasons, displayed a luxuriance of genius in describing the beauties of nature. Akenside and Armstrong excelled in didactic poetry. Even the Epopœa did not disdain an English dress;

but appeared to advantage in the *Leonidas* of Glover, and the *Epigoniad* of Wilkie. The public acknowledged a considerable share of dramatic merit in the tragedies of Young, Mallet, Home, and some other less distinguished authors. Very few regular comedies, during this period, were exhibited on the English theatre; which, however, produced many less laboured pieces, abounding with satire, wit, and humour. The *Careless Husband* of Cibber, and *Suspicious Husband* of Hoadley, are the only comedies of this age that bid fair for reaching posterity. The exhibitions of the stage were improved to the most exquisite entertainment by the talents and management of Garrick, who greatly surpassed all his predecessors of this, and perhaps every other nation, in his genius for acting; in the sweetness and variety of his tones, the irresistible magic of his eye, the fire and vivacity of his action, the elegance of attitude, and the whole pathos of expression. Quin excelled in dignity and declamation, as well as exhibiting some characters of humour, equally exquisite and peculiar. Mrs. Cibber breathed the whole soul of female tenderness and passion; and Mrs. Pritchard displayed all the dignity of distress. That Great Britain was not barren of poets at this period, appears from the detached performances of Johnson, Mason, Gray, the two Whiteheads, and the two Wartons; besides a great number of other bards, who have sported in lyric poetry, and acquired the applause of their fellow-citizens. Candidates for literary fame appeared even in the higher sphere of life, embellished by the nervous style, superior sense, and extensive erudition of a Corke; by the delicate taste, the polished muse, and tender feelings of a Lyttleton. King shone unrivalled in Roman eloquence. Even the female sex distinguished themselves by their taste and

ingenuity. Miss Carter rivalled the celebrated Dacier in learning and critical knowledge; Mrs. Lennox signalized herself by many successful efforts of genius, both in poetry and prose; and Miss Reid excelled the celebrated Rosalba in portrait painting, both in miniature and at large, in oil as well as in crayons. The genius of Cervantes was transfused into the novels of Fielding, who painted the characters, and ridiculed the follies of life, with equal strength, humour, and propriety. The field of history and biography was cultivated by many writers of ability; among whom we distinguish the copious Guthrie, the circumstantial Ralph, the laborious Carte, the learned and elegant Robertson, and above all, the ingenious, penetrating, and comprehensive Hume, whom we rank among the first writers of the age, both as an historian and philosopher. Nor let us forget the merit conspicuous in the works of Campbell, remarkable for candour, intelligence, and precision. Johnson, inferior to none in philosophy, philology, poetry, and classical learning; stands foremost as an essayist, justly admired for the dignity, strength, and variety, of his style, as well as for the agreeable manner in which he investigates the human heart, tracing every interesting emotion, and opening all the sources of morality. The laudable aim of enlisting the passions on the side of Virtue was successfully pursued by Richardson, in his *Pamela*, *Clarissa*, and *Grandisson*; a species of writing equally new and extraordinary, where, mingled with much superfluity, we find a sublime system of ethics, an amazing knowledge and command of human nature. Many of the Greek and Roman classics made their appearance in English translations, which were favourably received as works of merit. Among these we place, after Pope's *Homer*, *Virgil*, by Pitt and Warton,

GOLDSMITH.

Examine a savage in the history of his country and predecessors, you will find his warriors able to conquer armies, and his sages acquainted with more than possible knowledge: human nature is to him an unknown country; he thinks it capable of great things because he is ignorant of its boundaries; whatever can be conceived to be done, he allows to be possible, and whatever is possible, he conjectures must have been done. He never measures the actions and powers of others, by what himself is able to perform, nor makes a proper estimate of the greatness of his fellows, by bringing it to the standard of his own incapacity. He is satisfied to be one of a country where mighty things have been; and imagines the fancied powers of others reflect a lustre on himself. Thus, by degrees, he loses the idea of his own insignificance, in a confused notion of the extraordinary powers of humanity, and is willing to grant extraordinary gifts to every pretender, because unacquainted with their claims.

This is the reason why demi-gods and heroes have ever been erected in times or countries of ignorance and barbarity; they addressed a people who had high opinions of human nature, because they were ignorant how far it would extend; they addressed a people who were willing to allow that men should be gods, because they were yet imperfectly acquainted with God and with man. These impostors knew, that all men are naturally fond of seeing something very great, made from the little materials of humanity; that ignorant nations are not more proud of building a tower to reach heaven, or a pyramid to last for ages, than of raising up a demi-god of their own country and creation. The same pride that erects a colossus or a pyramid, instals a god or an hero; but though the ador-

ing savage can raise his colossus to the clouds, he can exalt the hero not one inch above the standard of humanity; incapable therefore of exalting the idol, he debases himself and falls prostrate before him.

[*Citizen of the World.*

JOHNSON.

The place which the wisdom or policy of antiquity had destined for the residence of the Abyssinian princes, was a spacious valley in the kingdom of Amhara, surrounded on every side by mountains, of which the summits overhang the middle part. The only passage, by which it could be entered, was a cavern that passed under a rock, of which it had long been disputed whether it was the work of nature, or of human industry. The outlet of the cavern was concealed by a thick wood, and the mouth which opened into the valley was closed with gates of iron, forged by the artificers of ancient days, so massy that no man without the help of engines could open or shut them.

From the mountains on every side, rivulets descended, that filled all the valley with verdure and fertility, and formed a lake in the middle inhabited by fish of every species, and frequented by every fowl whom nature has taught to dip the wing in water. The lake discharged its superfluities by a stream which entered a dark cleft of the mountain on the northern side, and fell with dreadful noise from precipice to precipice, till it was heard no more.

The sides of the mountains were covered with trees, the banks of the brooks were diversified with flowers; every blast shook spices from the rocks, and every month dropped fruits upon the ground. All animals that bite the grass, or browse the shrub, whether tame or wild, wandered in this extensive circuit, secured

from beasts of prey by the mountains which confined them. On one part were flocks and herds feeding in the pastures, on another all the beasts of chase frisking in the lawns; the sprightly kid was bounding on the rocks, the subtle monkey frolicking in the trees, and the solemn elephant reposing in the shade. All the diversities of the world were brought together, the blessings of nature were collected, and its evils extracted and excluded.

[*Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia.*

STUART.

The knight, while he acquired, in the company of the ladies, the graces of external behaviour, improved his natural sensibility and tenderness. He smoothed over the roughness of war with politeness. To be rude to a lady, or to speak to her disadvantage, was a crime which could not be pardoned. He guarded her possessions from the rapacious, and maintained her reputation against slander. The uncourteous offender was driven from the society of the valiant; and the interposition of the fair was often necessary to protect him from death. But the courtesy of the knight, though due in a peculiar manner to the female sex, extended itself to all the business and intercourse of civil life. He studied a habitual elegance of manners. Politeness became a knightly virtue; it even attended him to the field of battle, and checked his passions in the ardour of victory. The generosity and the delicate attentions he shewed to the enemy he had vanquished, are a satire on the warriors of antiquity. His triumphs were disgraced by no indecent joy, no brutal ferocity. Courteous and generous in the general strain of his conduct, refined to extravagance in his gallantry to the ladies, and declared protector of reli-

gion and innocence, he was himself to be free from every stain. His rank, his duties, and his cares, made him aim at the perfection of virtue.

[*View of Society in Europe.*

GIBBON.

The discoveries of ancient and modern navigators, and the domestic history or tradition of the most enlightened nations, represent the *human savage* naked both in mind and body, and destitute of laws, of arts, of ideas, and almost of language. From this abject condition, perhaps the primitive and universal state of man, he has gradually arisen to command the animals, to fertilise the earth, to traverse the ocean, and to measure the heavens. His progress in the improvement and exercise of his mental and corporeal faculties, has been irregular and various; infinitely slow in the beginning, and increasing by degrees with redoubled velocity: ages of laborious ascent have been followed by a moment of rapid downfall; and the several climates of the globe have felt the vicissitudes of light and darkness. Yet the experience of four thousand years should enlarge our hopes, and diminish our apprehensions: we cannot determine to what height the human species may aspire in their advances towards perfection; but it may safely be presumed that no people, unless the face of nature is changed, will relapse into their original barbarism. The improvements of society may be viewed under a threefold aspect. 1. The poet and philosopher illustrates his age and country by the efforts of a *single* mind; but these superior powers of reason or fancy, are rare and spontaneous productions, and the genius of Homer, or Cicero, or Newton, would excite less admiration, if they could be created by the will of a prince, or the lessons of a precep-

tor. 2. The benefits of law and policy, of trade and manufactures, of arts and sciences, are more solid and permanent; and many individuals may be qualified, by education and discipline, to promote, in their respective stations, the interest of the community. But this general order is the effect of skill and labour; and the complex machinery may be decayed by time, or injured by violence. 3. Fortunately for mankind, the more useful, or, at least, more necessary arts, can be performed without superior talents, or national subordination; without the powers of *one*, or the union of *many*. Each village, each family, each individual, must always possess both ability and inclination, to perpetuate the use of fire and of metals; the propagation and service of domestic animals; the methods of hunting and fishing; the rudiments of navigation; the imperfect cultivation of corn, or other nutritive grain; and the simple practice of the mechanic trades. Private genius and public industry may be extirpated; but these hardy plants survive the tempest, and strike an everlasting root into the most unfavourable soil. The splendid days of Augustus and Trajan were eclipsed by a cloud of ignorance; and the barbarians subverted the laws and palaces of Rome. But the scythe, the invention or emblem of Saturn, still continued annually to mow the harvests of Italy; and the human feasts of the Læstrigons have never been renewed on the coast of Campania.

Since the first discovery of the arts, war, commerce, and religious zeal, have diffused among the savages of the Old and New world, these inestimable gifts; they have been successively propagated; they can never be lost. We may therefore acquiesce in the pleasing conclusion, that every age of the world has increased, and still increases, the real wealth, the happiness, the

knowledge, and perhaps the virtue, of the human race.

[*History of the Roman Empire.*

BURKE.

By a constitutional policy, working after the pattern of nature, we receive, we hold, we transmit, our government and our privileges in the same manner in which we enjoy and transmit our property and lives. The institutions of policy, the goods of fortune, the gifts of Providence, are handed down to us and from us, in the same course and order. Our political system is placed in a just correspondence and symmetry with the order of the world, and with the mode of existence decreed to a permanent body composed of transitory parts; wherein, by the disposition of stupendous wisdom, mouldering together the great mysterious incorporation of the human race, the whole, at one time, never old, or middle-aged, or young, but, in a condition of unchangeable constancy, moves on through the varied tenour of perpetual decay, fall, renovation, and progression. Thus, by preserving the method of nature in the conduct of the state, in what we improve, we are never wholly new; in what we retain, we are never wholly obsolete. By adhering in this manner, and on these principles, to our forefathers, we are guided, not by the superstition of antiquaries, but by the spirit of philosophic analogy. In this choice of inheritance we have given to our frame of polity the image of a relation in blood; binding up the constitution of our country with our dearest domestic ties: adopting our fundamental laws into the bosom of our family affections; keeping inseparable, and cherishing with the warmth of all their combined and mutually reflected charities, our state, our hearths, our sepulchres, and our altars.

[*Reflections on the Revolution in France.*

BLAIR.

We may easily be satisfied that applause will be often shared by the undeserving, if we allow ourselves to consider from whom it proceeds. When it is the approbation of the wise only and the good which is pursued, the love of praise may then be accounted to contain itself within just bounds, and to run in its proper channel. But the testimony of the discerning few, modest and unassuming as they commonly are, forms but a small part of the public voice. It seldom amounts to more than a whisper, which amidst the general clamour is drowned. When the love of praise has taken possession of the mind, it confines not itself to an object so limited. It grows into an appetite for indiscriminate praise. And who are they that confer this praise? A mixed multitude of men, who in their whole conduct are guided by humour and caprice, far more than by reason; who admire false appearances, and pursue false gods; who enquire superficially, and judge rashly; whose sentiments are for the most part erroneous, always changeable, and often inconsistent. Nor let any one imagine, that by looking above the crowd, and courting the praise of the fashionable and the great, he makes sure of true honour. There are a great vulgar, as well as a small. Rank often makes no difference in the understanding of men, or in their judicious distribution of praise. Luxury, pride, and vanity have frequently as much influence in corrupting the sentiments of the great, as ignorance, bigotry, and prejudice have in misleading the opinions of the crowd. And is it to such judges as these that you submit the supreme direction of your conduct? Do you stoop to court their favour as your chief distinction, when an object of so much juster and higher ambition is presented to you *in the praise of God*? God is the only

unerring judge of what is excellent. His approbation alone is the substance; all other praise is but the shadow of honour. The character which you bear in his sight is your only real one. How contemptible does it render you to be indifferent with respect to this, and to be solicitous about a name alone, a fictitious, imaginary character, which has no existence except in the opinions of a few weak and credulous men around you? They see no farther than the outside of things. They can judge of you by actions only; and not by the comprehensive view of all your actions, but by such merely as you have had opportunity of bringing forth to public notice. But the sovereign of the world beholds you in every light in which you can be placed. The silent virtues of a generous purpose and a pious heart, attract his notice equally with the most splendid deeds. From him you may reap the praise of good actions which you had no opportunity of performing. For he sees them in their principle; he judges of you by your intentions; he knows what you would have done. You may be in his eyes a hero or a martyr, without undergoing the labours of the one, or the sufferings of the other. [Sermons.

BEATTIE.

There is no modern writer, whose style is more distinguishable than that of Dryden. Energy and ease are its chief characters. The former is owing to a happy choice of expressions, equally emphatical and plain; the latter to a laudable partiality in favour of the idioms and radical words of the English tongue; the *native* riches and *peculiar* genius whereof are perhaps more apparent in him than in any other of our poets. In Dryden's more correct pieces, we meet with no affectation of words of Greek or Latin etymology.

nor cumbersome pomp of epithets no drawling circumlocutions, no idle glare of images, no blunderings round about a meaning; his English is pure and simple, nervous and clear, to a degree which Pope has never exceeded, and not always equalled. Yet, as I have elsewhere remarked, his attachment to the vernacular idiom, as well as the fashion of his age, often betrays him into a vulgarity, and even meanness, of expression, which is particularly observable in his translations of Virgil and Homer; and in those parts of his writings where he aims at pathos or sublimity? In fact, Dryden's genius did not lead him to the sublime or pathetic. Good strokes of both may be found in him; but they are momentary, and seem to be accidental. He is too witty for the one, and too familiar for the other. That he had no adequate relish for the majesty of *Paradise Lost*, is evident to those who have compared his opera called *The State of Innocence* with that immortal poem; and that his taste for the true pathetic was imperfect, too manifestly appears from the general tenor of his Translations, as well as Tragedies. His Virgil abounds in lines and couplets of the most perfect beauty; but these are mixed with others of a different stamp; nor can they who judge of the original by this translation ever receive any tolerable idea of that uniform magnificence of sound and language, that exquisite choice of words and figures, and that sweet pathos of expression and of sentiment, which characterise the Mantuan Poet.—In delineating the more familiar scenes of life, in clothing plain moral doctrines with easy and graceful versification, in the various departments of comic satire, and in the spirit and melody of his lyric poems, Dryden is inferior to none of those who went before him. He exceeds his master Chaucer in the first; in the three last, he rivals Horace;

the style of whose epistles he has happily imitated in his *Religio Laici*, and other didactic pieces; and the harmony and elegance of whose odes he has proved that he could have equalled, if he had thought proper to cultivate that branch of the poetic art. Indeed, whether we consider his peculiar significancy of expression, or the purity of his style; the sweetness of his lyric, or the ease and perspicuity of his moral poems; the sportive severity of his satire, or his talents in wit and humour; Dryden, in point of *genius* (I do not say *taste*), seems to bear a closer affinity to Horace, than to any other ancient or modern author. For energy of words, vivacity of description, and apposite variety of numbers, his *Feast of Alexander* is superior to any ode of Horace or Pindar now extant.

Dryden's verse, though often faulty, has a grace and a spirit peculiar to itself. That of Pope is more correct, and perhaps upon the whole more harmonious; but it is in general more languid, and less diversified. Pope's numbers are sweet but elaborate; and our sense of their energy is in some degree interrupted by our attention to the art displayed in their contexture: Dryden's are natural and free; and, while they communicate their own sprightly motion to the spirits of the reader, hurry him along with a gentle and pleasing violence, without giving him time either to animadvert on their faults, or to analyze their beauties. Pope excels in solemnity of sound; Dryden, in an easy melody, and boundless variety of rhythm. In this last respect he is perhaps superior to all other English poets, Milton himself not excepted. Till Dryden appeared, none of our writers in rhyme of the last century approached in any measure to the harmony of Fairfax and Spenser. Of Waller it can only be said, that he is not harsh; of Denham and Cowley, if a few

couplets were struck out of their works, we could not say so much. But in Dryden's hands, the English rhyming couplet assumed a new form, and seems hardly susceptible of any further improvement. One of the greatest poets of this century, the late and much lamented Mr. Gray of Cambridge, modestly declared to me, that if there was in his own numbers any thing that deserved approbation, he had learned it all from Dryden.

Critics have often stated a comparison between Dryden and Pope, as poets of the same order, and who differed only in *degree* of merit. But, in my opinion, the merit of the one differs considerably in *kind* from that of the other. Both were happy in a sound judgment and most comprehensive mind. Wit and humour, and learning too, they seem to have possessed in equal measure; or, if Dryden may be thought to have gone deeper in the sciences, Pope must be allowed to have been the greater adept in the arts. The diversities in point of correctness and delicacy, which arose from their different ways of life, I do not now insist upon. But setting those aside, if Dryden founds any claim of preference on the originality of his manner, we shall venture to affirm, that Pope may found a similar claim, and with equal justice, on the perfection of his taste; and that, if the critical writings of the first are more voluminous, those of the second are more judicious; if Dryden's inventions are more diversified, those of Pope are more regular, and more important. Pope's style may be thought to have less simplicity, less vivacity, and less of the purity of the mother-tongue; but is at the same time more uniformly elevated, and less debased by vulgarism, than that of his great master:—and the superior variety that animates the numbers of the latter, will perhaps

be found to be compensated by the steadier and more majestic modulation of the former. Thus far their merits would appear to be pretty equally balanced.— But if the opinion of those critics be true, who hold that the highest regions of Parnassus are appropriated to pathos and sublimity, Dryden must after all confess that he has never ascended so far as his illustrious imitator; there being nothing in the writings of the first so pathetic as the *Epistle of Eloisa*, or the *Elegy on the Unfortunate Lady*; nor so uniformly sublime as the *Essay on Man*, or the *Pastoral of the Messiah*. This last is indeed but a selection and imitation of choice passages; but it bespeaks a power of imitation, and a taste in selection, that Dryden does not seem to have possessed. To all which may I not be permitted to add, what I think I could prove, that the pathos of Homer is frequently improved by Pope, and that of Virgil very frequently bebased by Dryden?

The writings of Dryden are stamped with originality but are not always the better for that circumstance. Pope is an imitator professedly, and of choice; but to most of those whom he copies he is at least equal; and to many of them superior: and it is pleasing to observe how he rises in proportion to his originals. Where he follows Denham, Buckingham, Roscommon, and Rochester in his *Windsor Forrest*, *Essay on Criticism*, and poem on *Silence*, he is superior indeed, but does not soar very high above them. When he versifies Chaucer, he catches, as by instinct, the ease, simplicity, and spirit of Dryden, whom he there emulates. In the *Rape of the Lock* he outshines Boileau, as much as the sylphs that flutter round Belinda exceed in sprightliness and luminous beauty those mechanical attendants of the goddess of luxury, who knead up plumpness for the chin of the canon, and pound vermilion

for the cheek of the monk. His *Eloisa* is beyond all comparison more sublime and more interesting than any of Ovid's *Heroines*. His imitations of Horace equal their archetypes in elegance, and often surpass them in energy and fire. In the lyric style, he was no match for Dryden: but when he copies the manner of Virgil, and borrows the thoughts of Isaiah, Pope is superior not only to himself, but to almost all other poets.

[*Essay on Poetry and Music.*

FOX.

Whatever might be the language of flatterers, and how loud soever the cry of a triumphant but deluded party, there were not wanting men of nobler sentiments and of more rational views. Minds once thoroughly imbued with the love of what Sydney, in his last moments, so emphatically called the good old cause, will not easily relinquish their principles; nor was the manner in which absolute power was exercised, such as to reconcile to it, in practice, those who had always been averse to it in speculation. The hatred of tyranny must, in such persons, have been exasperated by the experience of its effects, and their attachment to liberty proportionably confirmed. To them the state of their country must have been intolerable: to reflect upon the efforts of their fathers, once their pride and glory, and whom they themselves had followed with no unequal steps, and to see the result of all in the scenes that now presented themselves, must have filled their minds with sensations of the deepest regret, and feelings bordering at least on despondency. To us, who have the opportunity of combining in our view of this period, not only the preceding, but subsequent transactions, the consideration of it may suggest reflections far different, and speculations more consola-

tory. Indeed, I know not that history can furnish a more forcible lesson against despondency, than by recording, that within a short time from those dismal days in which men of the greatest constancy despaired, and had reason to do so, within five years from the death of Sydney, arose the brightest æra of freedom known to the annals of our country.—[*Hist. of James II.*

Observations on Epistolary Composition.

EPISTOLARY writing possesses a kind of middle place between the serious and amusing species of composition. It appears at first view, to stretch into a very wide field: for there is no subject whatever, on which a person may not convey his thoughts to the public in the form of a letter. Lord Shaftesbury, for instance, and several other writers, have chosen to give this form to philosophical treatises. But this circumstance is not sufficient to class such treatises under the head of epistolary composition. Though they may bear the title of a letter to a friend, yet, after the first address, the friend disappears, and we perceive that it is in truth the public with whom the author corresponds. Seneca's Epistles are of this description: there is no probability that they ever passed in correspondence as real letters. They are no other than miscellaneous dissertations on moral subjects; which the author, for his convenience, chose to exhibit in the epistolary form. Even where one writes a real letter on some formal topic, as of moral or religious consolation, to a person under distress, such as Sir William Temple has written to the Countess of Essex on the death of her daughter, he is at liberty on such occasions to write wholly as a divine or as a philosopher,

and to assume the style of the one or of the other without reprehension. We consider the author not as writing a familiar letter, but as composing a formal discourse, suited to the peculiar circumstances of some individual.

Epistolary writing becomes a distinct species of composition, subject to the cognizance of criticism, only or chiefly, when it is of the easy and familiar kind; when it is conversation carried on upon paper, between two friends at a distance. Such an intercourse, when well conducted, may be rendered very agreeable to readers of taste. If the subject of the letters be important, they will be the more valuable. Even though there should be nothing very considerable in the subject, yet if the spirit and turn of the correspondence be agreeable; if they be written in a sprightly manner, and with native grace and ease, they may still be entertaining; more especially if there be any thing to interest us in the characters of the writers. Of the truth of this remark, the correspondence of Gray and of Cowper furnishes a striking illustration.

Concerning the letters of eminent men, the public has always shown an eminent degree of curiosity. We expect that their correspondence will discover something of their real character. It is indeed childish to expect, that in letters we are to find the whole heart of the writer unveiled. Concealment and disguise take place, more or less, in all human intercourse. But still, as letters from one friend to another make the nearest approach to conversation, we may expect to see more of a character displayed in these than in productions intended for public inspection. We please ourselves with beholding the writer in a situation which allows him to be at his ease, and to give vent occasionally to the overflowings of his

heart. When a writer has distinguished himself in his studied performances, and delighted us in those works which he intended for our perusal, we become interested in all that concerns him, and wish to be acquainted with his ideas, as they flowed, without any view to their publication, in the open communications of a private and friendly correspondence. Beautiful minds, like beautiful bodies, appear graceful in an undress. The awe which they inspire, when surrounded with all their dignity, is sometimes more striking than pleasing; but we feel ourselves relieved when admitted to their familiarity. We love to retire behind the scenes, and to observe the undisguised appearance of those who please us when industriously decorated for public exhibition.

Much, therefore, of the merit and the agreeableness of epistolary writing will depend on its introducing us to some acquaintance with the writer. Here, if any where, we look for the man, not for the author. Its first and fundamental requisite is, to be natural and simple; for a stiff and laboured manner is as bad in a letter as it is in conversation. This does not banish sprightliness and wit. These are graceful in letters, just as they are in conversation; when they flow easily, and without any appearance of study; when employed so as to season, not to cloy.

Much has been said concerning the epistolary style; as if any one style could be appropriated to the great variety of subjects which are discussed in letters. Ease should distinguish familiar letters, written on the common affairs of life; because the mind is usually at ease while they are composed. But even in these there may incidentally arise some topic that requires elevated language. Not to elevate our expressions on these occasions, is to write unnaturally; for nature

teaches us to express animated emotions of every kind in animated language.

The impassioned lover writes unnaturally, if he writes with the ease of *Sevigne*. The dependent writes unnaturally to a superior, if he adopts a style of familiarity. The suppliant writes unnaturally, if he rejects the figures dictated by distress. Conversation admits of every style but the poetic; and what are letters but written conversation? The great rule is, to follow nature, and to avoid an affected manner.

Ease and simplicity are ornaments to every species of composition. The most interesting letters are commonly such as have been written with the greatest facility. What the heart or the imagination dictates may always be readily expressed; but where there is no subject to warm or interest these, constraint is apt to appear; and hence, those letters of mere compliment, congratulation, or condolence, which have cost the authors most labour in composing, and which, for that reason, they perhaps consider as their masterpieces, never fail of being the most disagreeable and insipid to the reader.

It ought, however, to be remembered, that the ease and simplicity which I have recommended in epistolary correspondence, are not to be understood as importing entire carelessness. In writing to the most intimate friend, a certain degree of attention, both to the subject and the style, is requisite and becoming. It is no more than what we owe to ourselves, and to the friend with whom we correspond. A slovenly and negligent manner of writing argues a want of due respect. The licence which some persons assume of writing letters with too careless a hand, is apt to betray them into imprudence in what they write. The first requisite, both in conversation and correspon-

dence, is to attend to all the proper decorums which our own character and that of others demand. An imprudent expression in conversation may be forgotten and pass away; but when we take the pen in our hand, we must remember, *Litera scripta manet*.

The Greeks, remarkable as they were for diversity of composition, have not left many models in the epistolary style. The epistles attributed to Socrates, Xenophon, Æschines, Antisthenes, Aristippus, and Philo, have never been popular. Those which bear the name of Aristænetus, are composed in a taste less resembling the Attic than the Oriental. The descriptions in them are poetically luxuriant, but the language is not pure, nor the style simple.

With regard to the epistles ascribed to Phalaris, various opinions have been entertained among the learned. They have been considered as genuine by Temple, Boyle, King, Swift, and many others; while Dr. Bently, a more competent judge, has rejected them as spurious. It is now the opinion of those who are best qualified to decide, that in this violent controversy the victory was gained by Bently. This critic observes with his usual acrimony, that Mr. Boyle, who was afterwards earl of Orrery, made a bad book worse by giving a bad edition of it.

The letters of Cicero are the most valuable collection extant in any language. They are letters of real business, written to the greatest men of the age, composed with purity and elegance, but without the least affectation; and, what adds greatly to their merit, written without any view to publication. It appears that he never retained copies of his own letters; and we are wholly indebted to the care of his freed-man Tiro, for the extensive collection that appeared after his death. They contain the most authentic materi-

als for the history of that age; and are the last monuments which remain of Rome in its free state; the greatest part of them being written when the republic was on the brink of ruin. To his intimate friends, and especially to Atticus, he lays open his heart with great freedom. In the course of his correspondence with others, we are introduced into an acquaintance with several of the principal personages of Rome: and it is remarkable that most of Cicero's correspondents, as well as himself, are elegant and polite writers; a circumstance which serves to heighten our idea of the taste and manners of that age.

The epistles of the younger Pliny cannot without impropriety be termed *familiar*. For though many of them are addressed to his most intimate friends, and relate to personal topics, yet, as we know that they were published by the writer himself, after they had undergone his revision and correction, we may be assured that their purpose was not the simple effusion of his mind. In fact, the evident design of almost every letter in the collection is, to display the good qualities of the writer. They generally turn upon some act of munificence which he had performed, some instance of his literary or oratorical reputation, his attachment to study, his philosophical temper of mind, his love of virtue, in short, upon something that may heighten his character in the idea of his correspondent. His leading foible, indeed, the thirst of applause, they very amply exhibit; for he neither wished to conceal it, nor could he do so consistently with his purpose of attaining applause. But we shall in vain look for any touches of nature which may make us acquainted in other respects with the man. All is so varnished with splendid sentiments, and elegancies of thought and expression, that no peculiar features

are discernible. The subject of every letter is a theme on which the finest things are to be said; and we are sometimes tempted to believe, that the benevolent or generous action which he relates, was either wholly fictitious, or performed for the express purpose of displaying it to a friend in its fairest colouring.

After the Latin had ceased to be a living language, many excellent collections of epistles were composed in it. The learned men of different nations, whose rude dialects would not repay the labour of cultivation, wisely chose to communicate their thoughts in the pure language of the court of Augustus. Some of the earliest of these collections are disgraced by the barbarism of the times. But Petrarch shines amidst the surrounding obscurity. True genius, like his, could not but display its lustre, though it laboured under the disadvantage of a prevailing corruption of taste. His Latin style cannot be recommended as a model of purity.

Politian had also just pretensions to native genius. There is a warmth and vigour in his poetry, which fully prove him to have possessed no common talents. His epistles are elegant, but, like those of Pliny, whom he imitated, they are often formal and affected.

But among the modern epistolary writers, the first rank is to be assigned to Erasmus. His style, indeed, is not purely Ciceronian, though it displays many of the graces of Cicero's manner. He was not so scrupulously exact in his taste, as to reject a barbarous and Gothic expression, if it conveyed his idea with precision. But he had the skill to use it in such a way, that it acquired, in his writings, a grace and dignity. No man was better acquainted with the works of Cicero, and no man entertained a higher opinion of his beauties, or knew better how to imitate them.

But he despised the sect of Ciceronians, who would scarcely admit a particle which was not to be found in their favourite author. In his dialogue entitled *Ciceronianus*, he has ridiculed them with admirable wit and eloquence; nor would he countenance such affectation by any part of his writings. With all their defects in point of purity of language, his letters are uncommonly entertaining: they possess that spirit which genius can always exhibit, but which laborious dullness vainly imitates.

Many of the epistles of Joseph Scaliger are extremely curious; and they perhaps serve to evince his astonishing capacity and erudition, as completely as the most elaborate of his productions. Those of Grotius, Vossius, and Casaubon, are very numerous and variegated they contain much valuable information; particularly with regard to the literary history of their own times. But these collections are less remarkable for the style than for the matter.

I shall not here attempt to characterize a numerous class of epistolary writers who possess little merit of their own, and who have derived all their fame from a servile imitation of Cicero. Paulus Manutius, one of these, is said to have spent a month in composing a single letter. We see, indeed, the consequence of this scrupulous attention: an elegant and truly Ciceronian phraseology; but we observe none of the native graces of unaffected composition.

The French have arrogated to themselves great merit as epistolary writers. Their genius and their language appear to be well adapted to this species of composition. But some of the most celebrated writers among them have renounced the advantages which nature afforded them, and have destroyed all the beauties of sentiment and vivacity, by an unseason-

able profusion of wit. Balzac fatigues his reader with the constant recurrence of laboured ingenuity.

Voiture abounds with beautiful thoughts, expressed with great elegance. In other writers the language of compliment disgusts by its unmeaning sameness and formality. In him it has the grace of delicacy. But even he, though indisputably a fine writer, is justly censured by Bouhours, for thoughts which the critic calls false.

The letters of Sevigne are now esteemed the most complete model of a familiar correspondence. They turn indeed very much upon trifles, the incidents of the day, and the news of the town; and they are overloaded with extravagant compliments, and expressions of fondness, to her favourite daughter: but at the same time they show such perpetual sprightliness, they contain such easy and varied narration, and so many strokes of the most lively and beautiful painting, perfectly free from all affectation, that they are justly entitled to high praise.

The most distinguished collection of letters in the English language is that of Pope, Swift, and their friends. This collection is, on the whole, an entertaining and agreeable one; and contains much wit and refinement. It is not, however, free from the faults imputed to the epistles of Pliny; it betrays too much study and labour. Yet we find not a few of these letters written with great ease and simplicity. Those of Arbuthnot, in particular, are entitled to the highest praise.* Swift's also are unaffected; they exhibit his

* Arbuthnot was a man of great comprehension; skilful in his profession, versed in the sciences, acquainted with ancient literature, and able to animate his mass of knowledge by a bright and active imagination: a scholar with great brilliance of wit; a wit who, in the crowd of life, retained and discovered a noble ardour of religious zeal.—*Johnson's Life of Pope.*

character with all its defects. It were to be wished, for the honour of his memory, that his epistolary correspondence had not been drained to the dregs, by so many successive publications as have been given to the world. Several of the letters of Atterbury and Bolingbroke are written with a masterly hand. The censure of writing in too artificial a manner falls heaviest upon Pope himself. There is visibly more of study, and less of nature and the heart in his letters, than in those of most of his correspondents.

It has been so long said as to be commonly believed, that the true characters of men may be found in their letters, and that he who writes to his friend, lays his heart open before him. But the truth is, that such were the simple friendships of the Golden age, and are now the friendships only of children. Very few can boast hearts which they dare lay open to themselves, and of which by whatever accident exposed, they do not shun a distinct and continued view: and certainly what we hide from ourselves, we do not show to our friends. There is indeed no transaction which offers stronger temptations to fallacy and sophistication than epistolary intercourse. In the eagerness of conversation, the first emotions of the mind often burst out before they are considered; in the tumult of business, interest and passion have their genuine effect; but a friendly letter is a calm and deliberate performance, in the cool of leisure, in the stillness of solitude; and surely no man sits down to depreciate by design his own character.

Friendship has no tendency to secure veracity in this case; for by whom can a man so earnestly wish to be thought better than he is, as by him whose kindness he desires to gain or keep? Even in writing to the world there is less constraint: the author is not

confronted with his reader, and takes his chance of approbation among the different dispositions of mankind; but a letter is addressed to a single mind, of which the prejudices and partialities are known; and must therefore please, if not by favouring them, at least by forbearing to expose them.

To charge those favourable representations which men give of their own minds, with the guilt of hypocritical falsehood, would show more severity than knowledge. The writer commonly believes himself. Almost every man's thoughts, while they are general, are right; and most hearts are pure, while temptation is absent. It is easy to awaken generous sentiments in privacy; to despise death when there is no danger; to glow with benevolence when there is nothing to be given. While such ideas are formed, they are felt; and self-love does not suspect the gleam of virtue to be a meteor of fancy.

If the letters of Pope are considered merely as compositions, they seem to be premeditated and artificial. It is one thing to write because there is something which the mind wishes to discharge; and another to solicit the imagination, because ceremony or vanity requires something to be written. He is too fond of writing like a wit. His letters to ladies are full of affection. The swelling sentences which he occasionally uses, might be tolerated in a formal harangue: but are very unsuitable to the style of one friend corresponding with another.

It is evident that his own importance often swells in his mind. He is afraid of writing, lest the clerks of the post-office should know his secrets; he has many enemies; he considers himself as surrounded by universal jealousy. "After many deaths, and many dispersions," says he, "two or three of us may still be

brought together, not to plot, but to divert ourselves, and the world too, if it pleases:" and they can live together, and "show what friends' wits may be, in spite of all the fools in the world." All this while it was likely that the clerks did not know his hand; he certainly had no more enemies than a public character like his inevitably excites; and with what degree of friendship the wits might live, very few were so much fools as ever to inquire.

The letters of Lord Chesterfield have been highly praised. As compositions, they indeed possess much elegance; but they ought never to be put into the hands of youth, without serious precautions against the tendency of that detestable system of morality which they inculcate. No man has more closely imitated the French in every circumstance. Like them, he writes with perspicuity, vivacity, and that gracefulness which is sure to please, and which he so strenuously recommends. He is himself a proof of the efficacy of the graces; for, with all his merit, he was certainly superficial, and yet obtained a degree of fame which more solid writers have seldom enjoyed.

The letters of Lady M. W. Montague are not unworthy of being classed with those of Sevigne. They have much of the French ease and vivacity; and perhaps retain the character of an agreeable epistolary style, as completely as any collection of letters which has yet appeared in the English language. But in genuine grace and elegance, they are surpassed by those of Gray, Cowper, and Beattie.*

* Morhofii Polyhistor, tom. i. p. 270. Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, lect. 37. Aikin's Letters to his Son, vol. 1. Let. vi. Knox's Essays, No. 171. Johnson's Life of Pope.

